



AGE OF COSMIC EXPLORATION

BOOK 03

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Age of Cosmic Exploration

(大宇宙时代)

by

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Synopsis

Endless sky and infinite space, the cosmos isn't some paradise waiting to be found, it is full of darkness and danger, death and terror of the great unknown. However, for that glittering swath of blue, we have no fear! For the longevity of men, we have no regrets! Nothing shall stand in our way because it is finally our time, our age! The age of cosmos exploration!

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Chapter 201: Success and Infection

After the baby super species was brought back to the Hope, it was immediately taken over by the biology committee led by Saburo. Yao Yuan reminded them to be cautious, to not expose the creature to the Hope's air, because it might get infected by Earth's germs. The danger of infection went both ways; the germs on this planet could be fatal to mankind and germs from Earth could be the same for this super species.

Yao Yuan's heart shook when he thought of the two super species' shrieks when they absconded via the shuttle. Regardless, they needed to do what needed to be done. At the very least, they needed to ensure the baby super species stayed alive.

However, the little thing that was only the size of half a palm presented Yao Yuan and the gang with a huge problem.

Its appetite was absurd.

In just half an hour, it consumed about 30 kilograms of fish. These were fish with legs that the Hope had caught in the sea and river for the purpose of scientific experiment. They were kept in isolated tanks, so they were free from the Hope's germs and were perfect to be used as feed for the juvenile super species.

The fish from the river were smaller in size. There were 3 in total, each about 3 to 5 kilograms. Other than the fish from the river, there was only one fish from the sea, and it alone was about 15 kilograms in weight.

When the fish were fed to the super species, it stopped its panicky squeaking and quieted down immediately. It started munching on the offered fish...

The little creature was only 300 grams, so initially the scientists stopped after feeding it 300 grams of fish. Who knew that after about 10 seconds or so, the creature would start squealing again, nodding its small head at the opening the fish would slide through. Its action was extremely endearing. Obviously, it was still not full.

Therefore, the scientists fed it another 50 grams of fish and stopped no matter how much noise the creature made afterwards. After it realized it was not getting any more food, it laid down its head and started sleeping. Before that though, it did something that surprised the scientists. It pooped out ball after ball of extremely dry excrement.

The scientists collected the excrement and analyzed it. They discovered that there were no nutrients at all in them, they had only a small amount of water, fiber, and waste product. They weighed about 300 grams. In other words, the creature fully digested the 350 grams of fish it consumed in a matter of minutes. Its metabolism was unbelievable.

Then, the little creature woke up from its slumber and excreted a pool of liquid at a spot far away from the location where it laid down to sleep. After that, it dragged its body back to its rudimentary nest to continue sleeping. The observing scientists were pleasantly surprised.

Impressed by its metabolism, the scientists would toss it fish every time after it passed its bowels. The thing's appetite appeared to be bottomless, it just kept on eating. Of course, the scientists weren't just playing with the creature, In the meantime, all kinds of analyses had started. The baby super species that was fed showcased incredibly high intelligence; it even cooperated with the analyses. This improved the analysis progress tremendously. Of course, this was traded for the Hope's stock of fish.

When Yao Yuan heard the news, it was the time when the baby super species threw its tantrum, halting the analysis progress.

The creature was too clever. It understood that if it allowed the scientist to poke or study its body, it would get fish as reward. Therefore, it came to understand the contractual relationship it was in: if there was no fish, then it would not allow the analytical machines anywhere near it.

Even though it only weighed several hundred grams, when it wanted to, even a room of adults wouldn't be able to catch up to it. Thankfully, its appendages were still not fully formed. However, its mouthful of sharp teeth was something else. It took a small bite out of a metallic table and immediately it missed a corner.

It was a warning for the scientists to back off. After it realized that no fish was coming, it ignored the gauntlet of eyes that stared at it and started to sleep right on top of the table of the germ-free room.

Yao Yuan saw the whole struggle and shook his head helplessly. He ordered some men to catch more fish from the sea, preferably

those bigger than 10 kilograms.

Just like that, the baby super species started its pampered life on the Hope. The study on the super species also continued without a hitch. A report was given to Yao Yuan the very next day.

According to the report, the super species' musculature was completely different from all the other animals mankind had seen. Its muscles were like high-density iron fibers, tough and strong. In just a day, the creature had grown 300 grams in weight, but there was no difference in its size. Obviously, that had to do with its unique musculature.

Other than that, its bone structure was also incredibly unique. Even though they couldn't cut the beast open to study it, the 4th revolution technology allowed mankind to obtain a lot of information without the need for autopsy. For example, other than the common calcium and other components normally found in bones, the super species' bone structure contained traces of various metallic substances. So in a way, their bones were not bones but half-metals.

The creature's blood contained a special type of enzyme. It was responsible for the creature's high metabolism. Under the careful experiment of the Academy, they found out the enzyme could even digest the flesh alien cells. Of course, the amount of alien cells had to be controlled; too much of them and it would be the super species that was infected and consumed.

This meant that the super species' digestive system depended on its blood instead of specific organs, like stomach or intestines. This

was proven to be true after more analysis. The super species had a sac-like organ in its blood circulatory system. It would pump out the unique enzyme whenever it detected the presence of food in the body. This allowed it to digest the food in a short amount of time.

Simultaneously, the enzyme in the creature's blood was not only good for digestion, it was also a type of bacterial disinfectant. In other words, its circulatory system acted as its immune system as well! The enzyme was able to break down all sorts of virus, bacteria, and microbes, but of course only up to a certain amount.

This was the thing Saburo needed. This enzyme could replace the Component X in the Ultimate Vaccine! By fixing the formula, the vaccine could be used by normal civilians!

Several days passed and the baby super species had visibly grown in size. It had inhaled about 400 kilograms of food, and its weight had increased to about 2,000 grams, but it still kept that endearing cuteness. As the amount of feeding instances increased, it could even differentiate between mankind and food. One time an intern weighed it without giving feeding it first, and it opened its mouth to envelop the intern's finger. When everyone thought it was going to break the intern's finger, it merely squealed and shook the finger, asking for food.

At the same time, the two grown super species were spotted around the edge of the forest, about 20 kilometers from the new capital. The surveillance unit immediately gave out a warning. Black Star Trooper Unit 2, who was nearby, instantly went into action, but when they arrived, they were greeted with animal

carcasses of differing sizes.

The super species appeared daily, but whenever the troopers arrived, they would be gone, only leaving behind the carcasses. In a fit of inspiration, Yao Yuan ordered the men to weigh the carcass. They realized they weighed the same as the amount of food the baby super species was ingesting.

The parents' instinct was definitely something impressive.

However, did this mean that it was possible to communicate with the super species?

At the end of the day, Yao Yuan really didn't want to kill these super species, because they weren't aliens, they were native animals on this new planet. Mankind was no different from those aliens that wanted to take over Earth by wiping out humanity. Furthermore, wiping them out would be difficult, as there were 5 of them in this patch of forest alone. Who knew how many there were in total across the entire planet?

If communication was possible, could they be tamed like their young ones? With such a powerful companion at mankind's side, it would be a lot safer when humanity wanted to venture into the jungle. After all, the planet had scary creatures, like dinosaurs, traipsing all over it.

When such thoughts cropped into Yao Yuan's mind, news came from the surveillance shuttle.

On the sixth day after the baby super species was brought the Hope, the two grown super species appeared at the fringe of the jungle again. However, the surveillance footage showed the larger of the two limping while it walked. The wound on its leg that was cut open by sawblade was festering and postulating...

Obviously, it was infected by Earth's germs, viruses, or microbes!

Chapter 202: Old and New Unified System

"... Regarding this problem, I admit my culpability."

In the emergency meeting, a tired-looking Saburo spoke first. Then he offered a 90 degree bow that was culturally-unique to the Japanese.

Yao Yuan sighed. Saburo was a good man, and Yao Yuan believed kindness should be repaid with kindness, so even before this, he didn't pick on Saburo because of his nationality. Yes, the Chinese and Japanese had a long history of animosity, but after a prolonged period of interaction, it had all dispersed. This was because Saburo exemplified an honorable man.

Yao Yuan shook his head at Saburo. "No, this is no one's fault. Before I gave the order for the Black Star Troopers to venture into the forest to clear out the beast, both you and Ivan, alongside many other professors, reminded me that infection goes both ways. I knew of the danger beforehand, but the new capital had to be built. Furthermore, none of us could have foreseen the Ultimate Vaccine for the public would take this long to complete. No one is at fault; the only thing we can learn from this is to not overestimate our own technology next time."

Saburo's expression eased for a bit, but he still looked as exhausted as ever. For the past few months, he hadn't had a good night's sleep that lasted for more than five hours. It seriously affected his health.

Yao Yuan asked, "So how goes the progress for the mass-use Ultimate Vaccine? Is it possible for us to introduce immunity to the native life forms on this planet so that they won't be harmed by the virus, microbes, and bacteria we carry?"

Saburo answered, after a brief consideration, "Theoretically, it should be possible. The vaccine is not a pure antibiotic; it works by evolving the organism's innate immune system. Therefore, if we allow the base for the vaccine to interact with Earth's unique strain of virus, it should theoretically be able to produce a vaccine that enables immunity for this planet's native organisms. Of course, it needs time."

Ivan, who stood beside him, added, "Captain, we're not technically on a time crunch, so don't worry too much. This new planet is wildly different from Earth. No matter how fatal the virus is, as long as it is not airborne, no, even if it is airborne, we have more than enough time on our hands."

Yao Yuan was shocked. "How so? Currently we have more than 100 cases of native animals being infected by Earth's viruses. And we haven't even started on the plants yet. But with the migration of our people and pollination of Earth's plant lives, like paddy, wheat, vegetables, and maize, wouldn't the plants on this planet succumb to mass infection?"

Ivan shook his head. "Captain, you missed out on one important detail, and that is the speed of contamination. The threat of bioterrorism back on Earth was so huge was because of mankind's mobility. If not quarantined, a virus originating in a small country could spread across the entire Earth in just one day. However, on

this new planet, none of the animals we noticed have the capability of rounding the planet in 24 hours. Furthermore, due to its unique gravitational pull of having binary moons, the animals on this planet do not perform migration. In other words, if we humans don't purposely wonder beyond the confines of the capital, the range of contamination will be limited to the area around the capital."

Yao Yuan relaxed considerably after hearing Ivan's explanation. As long as the entire planet's ecosystem was completely destroyed, the sacrifice of an isolated area was acceptable. Nature had its way of recovering itself; as long as the ecosystem at large was still intact, the relatively small scar would be healed over time.

"If that's the case, we better rush the progress for the Ultimate Vaccine. We need two versions, one for Earth-dwellers, and another for the organisms native to this planet..."

Yao Yuan petered off to silence. The scientists were used to this quirk of his. There were three people on the Hope that acted this way. Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, and Yao Yuan, and all three had access to the Thinker power. They tended to escape into their thoughts in the middle of things, so the surrounding people had learned to let them be whenever these happened.

After a long silence, Yao Yuan suddenly addressed the meeting room. "Ladies and gentlemen, I have a question: is it possible for us to evolve the entire planet's virus environment? With our technology, is it possible for us to do that?"

That sent the room in a chaos. Researchers from multiple fields

started plying their own point of view. They were all discussing the possibility of redressing the microbial ecosystem of an entire planet with 4th revolution technology.

After a long time, the scientist finally reached a relatively agreed upon consensus. It was doable, but the actual plan needed a lot of ironing out. The one thing they had to be careful with was the planet's native biodiversity. Compared to the planet's natural environment, the plants brought from Earth were unvaried and monotonous. The plan had to ensure that the planet's biodiversity was preserved, or else the ecosystem would implode upon itself due to a limited gene pool.

Therefore, the best way to go about this was to mix the new planet and Earth's viruses, microbes, and bacteria. Simultaneously, every life form that originated from Earth would be given a shot of the Ultimate Vaccine. The vaccine would also be sprayed across the new planet. This way, both parties would acclimate to the same environment, striking the perfect balance.

The scale of this project would be enormous. According to calculations, under the condition of not harming the new planet's native biodiversity, the plan would take 50 to 100 years to complete.

Of course, this was all a draft. With an increased discovery of the new planet, the plan would need to receive editing and modifications. This was a plan that would last for centuries, so there was no need to rush. The most important thing now was to create a version of the Ultimate Vaccine that could be used by the general public. And that still needed time...

After the draft of the New Planet Transformation Project: Old and New Unified System was set into motion, Yao Yuan set a limit for Black Star Troopers' radius of activity. With the new capital as its center, they were not allowed out of a 300 kilometers radius. Of course, they were free to do anything within it.

The day after the meeting, Yao Yuan grabbed his space armor, weapons, and a bunch of antibiotics from Earth to the spot where the two super species would appear every day. Understanding the super species' intelligence, Yao Yuan didn't allow anyone to accompany him. Even the troopers who were on surveillance duty were ordered away.

Yao Yuan wanted to conduct a test. The test would not only save the two super species, since Yao Yuan felt for their desire to protect their child, but also this one interaction would decide how humanity would handle these super species. They were too powerful for Yao Yuan to leave them be. So if they were still hostile against mankind, Yao Yuan would have no choice but to run them into extinction.

Of course, Yao Yuan was hoping that they could exist in peace, or maybe in cooperation, like the prehistoric men and wolves.

Suddenly, Yao Yuan felt two sources of malice coming his way. However, when they were about 1,000 meters from where he was, they stopped. Yao Yuan could feel them retreating.

Yao Yuan stood up and he could feel the two sources immediately

take another 50 meters retreat. What Yao Yuan did next was interesting. He tossed all his weapons to the side and pushed his arms up in surrender.

Almost immediately, he felt hesitation in the two super species. Their intelligence quickly picked up the meaning of his action. Yao Yuan didn't mean them harm. However, they recognized Yao Yuan's red armor and knew that it was him who once hurt them, so they were being extra cautious.

Yao Yuan pushed a button on his space armor and a squealing sound was broadcasted. It was a recording of the baby super species.

The super species were greatly affected. They stopped hesitating and rushed to the edge of the forest. However, their actions remained watchful. The smaller of the two hid itself in the shadows, while the bigger male stepped out into the open.

The wound on its leg had started decaying, and the beast seemed to be swaying in the wind. Its eyes were bloodshot; it was severely infected.

At that moment, the male super species and Yao Yuan's eyes met.

Chapter 203: First Aid

In that brief eye contact, Yao Yuan no longer saw the condescension and frost that were previously there. In its faltering gaze, Yao Yuan saw that it treated him as an equal. Of course, there was still caution and even an underlying tone of pleading.

"Can you hear me? Regardless, I doubt you can understand. Then again, you should be fine sensing malice or murderous intent," Yao Yuan said.

The male super species took a few steps back, but it didn't prepare for attack or escape. It lowered its head slightly and stared curiously at Yao Yuan. There was brilliance in its eyes, proving that it was much more sophisticated than common critters.

Yao Yuan scratched his head, having second thoughts that he could communicate with these creatures. The lack of a common language was one issue, and even though these creatures were more clever than common beasts, they still hadn't reached sentience like humanity had. Their intelligence was probably only slightly better than orangutans', chimpanzees', and dolphins'.

Lastly, before this, there was animosity on both sides. The super species had killed one trooper and Yao Yuan had stolen their baby.

Yao Yuan decided to continue trying. He activated his Anima power to communicate his intention to the super species. He only wanted to heal its wound and not hurt it. However, whenever he took a step forward, even when unarmed, the male super species

took a corresponding step back. Perhaps the creature thought the man before it could extend its claw from its red exoskeleton whenever he wanted.

Yao Yuan was helpless because the male super species was already at the edge of the forest. A few more steps and it would run straight back into the forest. He had no choice but to stop where he was and figure out another tactic. Before he could come up with anything, the female super species gave out her drumlike roar and the male super species tensed immediately. They turned and disappeared into the jungle.

The first attempt at communication failed...

Yao Yuan repeated the same thing for an entire week, but it was to no avail. The female super species would give out her call every time the male super species made brief eye contact with Yao Yuan. They kept racing back into the jungle no matter what Yao Yuan did. Yao Yuan even tried putting out some food around the area, but it was no use.

However, the male super species got increasingly weakened. Its rotted leg was so bent out of shape that it could barely stand on it anymore. If this continued, it would die from bacterial infection soon...

On the ninth day, Yao Yuan returned to his usual post. The super species would appear at 11 AM and leave at 11:30 AM. It had become a routine.

On that day, Yao Yuan had waited until it was 11:30 AM, but there was still no sign of the two super species. Yao Yuan had many things to handle, so he couldn't possibly spend the rest of the day waiting. When it was almost 12, Yao Yuan decided he had to head back to the Hope. However, when the shuttle came to pick him up, he felt a source of malice approaching. He instinctually lifted up his gun. The smaller female super species leaped into the open. Weirdly enough, it wasn't accompanied by its bigger counterpart. Yao Yuan's Diviner power told him this wasn't some ambush set up by the super species.

Before Yao Yuan could make out what had happened, the female super species roared at him. The sound was like the beatings of drums, but Yao Yuan heard the anxiety and fear laced into it. Then the female super species leaped back into the forest. She ran for about 10 meters, stopped and turned around to look at Yao Yuan.

Yao Yuan understood immediately what had happened. The male super species was dying from infection and the female had come to him asking for help. Because the super species hadn't fallen ill before, they probably thought the sickness was caused by the sawblade wound. They had no one to turn to but its owner, Yao Yuan.

Yao Yuan didn't hesitate and followed the female super species into the forest. Of course, he didn't forget to pack his weapons. He also activated his signal relay, so if anything happened, he could hold out until reinforcements arrived.

20 minutes later, Yao Yuan was led by the female super species to a dry outcrop in the middle of the jungle. The trees in the area

were comparatively sparse, so some sunlight managed to filter through the foliage. The time was about 12 in the afternoon but it was almost dusk on that planet.

The male super species was lying atop of a pile of plush leaves and branches. Its injured leg was so infected that Yao Yuan could see the bones peeking through. Some maggots like insects had already gathered around the festering wound.

Noticing the approaching sound, the male super species opened its eyes weakly. It opened its mouth lamely and its saliva dripped vertically to the ground. It was obvious the creature was skirting death; the once king of the jungle was now barely strong enough to stand up on its own.

Yao Yuan sighed as he approached the male super species. Suddenly, a shadow flashed before him. The female super species blocked his way, hissing at him.

"... I have to heal him, or he'll die. Can you understand me?" Yao Yuan said as he retrieved from his backpack the antibiotic. This antibiotic was tested using the baby super species' blood. It could help the super species gain immunity against Earth's viruses. Of course, the male super species was so far gone, the most the antibiotic could do was stop the infection but not heal it. Amputation was necessary; it truly depended on the male super species whether it could ultimately survive or not.

Yao Yuan used his Anima power to communicate his intention. He had no idea whether the soulweb could cross language barriers, but it was his best option. The female super species appeared to

hesitate. She issued a low growl while sneaking a look at her partner lying helplessly behind her. The male super species was too weak to even close his mouth now.

Yao Yuan ignored the female super species and strode to the male super species' side. The female growled lightly, but it followed behind Yao Yuan. Beads of liquid flowed out of her eyes. Like mankind, she was crying for her loss. She used her serrated tongue to lick the male super species' eyes and mouth, moistening them.

Yao Yuan swatted away the insects on the wound. He tossed out a white pill from his pack of antibiotic before crushing it into paste. He then spread it generously over the male's leg wound. He should have applied disinfectant before applying the antibiotic, but he figured if he took out the cleaning alcohol, the female super species would have the wrong idea that he was prepping her partner for preservation, since that was how they preserved food.

One of the super species' pearls of wisdom was they knew that dipping meat in sea water before airing them dry would help with preservation.

After the white paste was spread evenly, Yao Yuan removed from his toolkit several tubes of liquids. These colorless liquids were some of the latest antibiotic potions. He twisted one open and poured it down the creature's throat. Since the creature was too weak to close its mouth completely, some of the liquid leaked out. Yao Yuan propped its head up to help the liquid go down.

The male super species was in a daze, while the female paced anxiously around him. She kept alternating between hissing at Yao

Yuan and licking her partner's face, consoling him.

Witnessing these two super species' extremely humane actions, Yao Yuan was silent. He could feel his heart shaking, especially when the tears fell out of the female beast's eyes. It reminded him of his encounter with that special her...

After the liquids were all poured, Yao Yuan sat back down the floor. He used his Anima power to communicate with the two super species. "That's the best I can do. The rest will depend on his luck. However, your species has a physical quality that is about 1,000 times greater than ours, so the chance of him recovering is extremely high... But to be safe, we have to remove his leg. The bone, muscle, and marrow within are completely rotted." Yao Yuan took a quick look around the wounded leg. He was right, the tendons had all rotted away; the only thing keeping it attached to the body was the iron-like muscle fibers.

Yao Yuan hesitated for a moment before deciding against calling the medical crew to carry out the amputation. After all, he was dealing with a pair of super species; if something went wrong in the process, he might be able to take them down, but the innocent medical crew would not be able to escape certain death. He could let the doctors take such an unnecessary risk. Furthermore, the super species' enhanced metabolism would render the anesthesia useless, and that would increase the chance of the surgery going awry.

"Fine, I guess I'll see this to the end."

Yao Yuan sighed as he stood up. His action was so sudden that it

spooked the female super species. He ignored her hissing and headed into the jungle. He came back 20 minutes later with the body of a 40 to 50 kilogram lizard on his back.

By the time he returned, the male super species' mouth was closed and his head was turned towards Yao Yuan's general direction. His eyes, though, were as unfocused as ever.

Chapter 204: Communication

The metabolism of the super species was truly something else. One hour after consuming the lizard Yao Yuan hunted, the originally dying super species slowly stood up. He was still shaking, but its condition was already several times better than before.

Yao Yuan himself was surprised by the tenacity of these super species. Thankfully, they didn't reproduce much. Based on the latest surveillance, there was at most 10,000 to 30,000 super species populating the entire planet. Relative to other animal species, this number meant that they were facing extinction. This was, after all, a completely untouched natural paradise, so their number shouldn't be so little.

Based on this observation, the Academy came up with a conclusion. Even if humanity didn't arrive at this planet, the super species would eventually die off in the next thousands of years, doomed by its own lack of reproduction.

When Yao Yuan was mulling over all this, the male super species suddenly growled at him before limping away.

What just happened?

Yao Yuan was confused because the low growl was neither hostile nor friendly. If anything, it felt like a perfunctory greeting. The fact that the male super species had left without much ado confused Yao Yuan as well. Could he be going to get some stuff to

repay Yao Yuan?

However, using his Diviner power, Yao Yuan could tell that the two super species had returned deep into the jungle. They didn't show signs of wanting to return. Yao Yuan curiously stared at the clump of trees that they had disappeared into.

Perhaps because the super species was used to being the ruler of the planet, they weren't used to being given aid. Furthermore, their own young was forcefully taken away by Yao Yuan. It was already a miracle in itself that they hadn't come after Yao Yuan.

Yao Yuan decided to shrug the super species' curious behavior off. All in all, he had received a piece of important information: the super species was more intelligent than the Academy gave them credit for. As long as they weren't sentient enough to purposely attack humanity, the cleverer these creatures were, the better. This was because it meant that the possibility of communication and co-existence was higher.

That afternoon, Yao Yuan returned to the Hope to attend to his business, and he received good news from Saburo. The public use version for the Ultimate Vaccine was completed, but it still needed to go through animal trials and simulated human trials. The simulated human trial was something created by the central mainframe. After both trials were proved successful, the vaccine could be given to the public.

Yao Yuan was understandably glad, but he was cautious enough to order the news be silenced. He didn't want raise the people's hopes up for nothing.

The morning after, Yao Yuan returned to the spot at the forest fringe. This time, both super species had arrived on time. Each of them had in their jaw a beast that weighed about 10 kilograms. The male super species had recovered nicely; he was no longer shaking uncontrollably. However, his leg was still rotting, and the decay had gotten worse. The bugs that Yao Yuan removed from the day before had returned.

This time Yao Yuan was surprised by the super species' reactions. The male growled at him before squatting down a few meters before him. He extended his injured leg towards Yao Yuan and kept blinking at him. Even though there was no verbal communication, the meaning was clear. He wanted Yao Yuan to continue applying the antibiotic; he understood its purpose now.

Without a word, Yao Yuan took out the antibiotic and the male beast just laid there motionless. He didn't even twitch. He stared silently at Yao Yuan. Yao Yuan frowned as he inspected the wound, adding, "The rot has penetrated deep into the tissue. You have to get it amputated. Can you understand me? This leg is already ruined; we have to cut it off or you will die."

Yao Yuan tried using his Anima power to communicate even though he had no idea whether it had any use. Suddenly, the male super species picked himself up. It startled Yao Yuan so much that he involuntarily jumped a few feet back. However, the beast didn't attack him, he bit on his rotted leg, and with a twist of his neck, tore it right off. The leg landed with a heavy thunk, and the area was immediately drenched with blood that poured out of the beast's open wound.

"F*ck." Yao Yuan cursed as he rushed forward to push the male super species back into a lying position. He squished the antibiotic pill and smothered it all over the wounded stump. However, the wound was so big that the blood simply wouldn't stop. Yao Yuan applied the biggest pressure he could to stop the bleeding.

Yao Yuan screamed into his communicator, "This is Captain Yao Yuan, send me a medic... No, the Defense Army's military surgeon unit. I need them to bring along all the equipment necessary for amputation. Also, remember to pack the latest nutrient potions and an abundance of manmade blood. My current coordinates are... Be quick. Also, bring the baby super species."

At that moment, Yao Yuan finally confirmed that it was possible to communicate with the super species, but of course, the Anima power still played a huge role. Yao Yuan had a feeling that these two super species would be the bridge that helped improve the relationship between mankind and other super species. Yao Yuan believed firmly that, based on their intelligence, the super species had their own channel of communication among themselves.

Yao Yuan believed that this pair of super species which had received not only contact but also aid from humanity would be the key to reaching the rest of the super species.

With this hope in his heart, Yao Yuan decided to go for a bet. After witnessing that the super species was clever enough to differentiate between things that meant them harm and things that could help them, Yao Yuan prayed they would show an intelligence that was greater than common beasts in the next few

hours, or else... they might be forced into extinction.

In less than 10 minutes, a shuttle appeared above them. The male beast had been greatly weakened from blood loss. He tried to stand up but was forced down by Yao Yuan. The female super species, though, kept roaring at the sky while making intermittent eye contact with the male super species.

"Don't be afraid, they're here to save you, not hurt you. They're here to save you..."

Yao Yuan kept repeating this, consoling them using his Anima power. However, the female super species kept hopping about agitatedly. However, her agitation didn't appear to be one born out of fear or even hostility.

When the shuttle landed, to Yao Yuan's anxiety and surprise, the female super species left the male super species' side and raced towards the shuttle. Yao Yuan knew that the super species' jaw was strong enough to bite through the space armor. Even though the outer material of the shuttle's walls was strong, they were still weaker than the material used in the space armor. If the super species went rabid, the shuttle would be torn apart like paper, and the people within...

As Yao Yuan stood up to chase after the female super species, she suddenly stopped. She gave out a series of chirping noises at a spot 10 meters away from the shuttle. The chirpings weren't as striking as her usual drum-like roars. In fact, they sounded gentle and maternal.

Watching this, Yao Yuan sighed in relief. He reapplied pressure on the male super species' wound and activated his Diviner power to predict possible danger. Other than that, he kept consoling both super species using his Anima power. He certainly had his hands full.

The shuttle landed carefully on the ground. In fact, the people inside the shuttle were also nervous as hell. Thankfully, they weren't Black Star Troopers, so even though they had heard people on the Hope mention super species, they had no clue as to how scary they could be. To them, the lizard lookalike didn't really look that threatening. After the shuttle landed, a group of medical doctors descended from it.

The female super species couldn't contain herself anymore. She surged forward like a flash of lightning, and before any of the crew members could react, she was already in front of the person who held in his hands a glass box. The person saw a flash of claws, and before he could react, the box in his hands fell to the ground in shattered pieces. When he came to, he saw that the female super species had in her mouth the snow-white baby super species. The chirping continued from the depths of her stomach and her tongue kept licking her baby playfully.

Everyone was caught by surprise, but after noticing that the person who previously held the box was unharmed, they rushed to aid the male super species and left the female and her child alone. The person who held the box stood rooted, his face as white as a sheet of paper.

A female doctor who passed him asked, "What are you doing? Too spooked by what happened?"

The person replied under his breath, "You have no idea... the glass box was created using the most sturdy nano bulletproof glass. It was used as the Hope's external windows. It could withstand collision with stray meteorites practically unharmed, but just now..."

"This six-legged lizard... sure is scary."

Chapter 205: Public Immunization

The surgery on the male super species was successful.

It had many things to do with the creature's natural tenacity. Even after such serious blood loss, when he was administered the nutrient potion, his circulatory system came alive, producing new blood. Even though the blood produced could still rival the blood loss, at least the beast was slightly more conscious. This way, the medical crew could work without fear of being hurt accidentally.

The surgery was simply the removal of the rotten muscles and suturing the wounds. The main issue was that the muscle of the super species was too tough, so normal surgical knife couldn't cut through it. Eventually, they had to use a laser equipment to sever the atrophied muscles.

During the surgery, the male super species was as still as a statue, as if his nervous system was immune to pain. His eyes were aimed at the female super species and baby super species. The female picked up the baby and dropped it at the male super species' side. Watching the family reunion, everyone present was moved.

After the antibiotic was spread over the wound, the surgery was officially completed. The male beast used his remaining five legs to move towards a small mountain of animal carcasses. He consumed almost half of it in record time. Then, the female beast took the baby super species to the same spot. She licked its body, asking it to eat.

The baby super species took a cautious bite out of a carcass, but it immediately spat it out. Its small nostrils sniffed the air and started squealing at the medical crew. It nodded its head up and down, the action it did whenever it wanted to be fed. After 10 days on the Hope, the baby creature had learned how to ask for food.

The medical crew stared at one another in confusion. Yao Yuan, though, had a fit of inspiration. He immediately called the shuttle to bring in some fish from the sea. Several minutes later, after Yao Yuan sliced a piece of white, firm fish meat and fed it to the baby super species, it chirped happily. It consumed the rest of the fish in one go and asked for more.

The two adult super species were startled. They cautiously sidled up to the heap of saltwater fish. They sniffed it and then growled animatedly. The male super species instantly took a bite out of a large fish that was about 30 kilograms heavy. He hopped to a spot about 10 meters away and started tearing into the fish. The female took a smaller fish and did the same. Obviously, these super species had a special liking for saltwater fish.

"...So that's why."

Yao Yuan suddenly remembered how these super species prepare their food. They first dipped them in sea water before airing them dry. That could mean that they need a high salt intake. It probably had to do with their high metabolism. The enzyme in their blood that was discovered during analysis was discovered in the fish's body as well. Even the sea water from this planet had trace amounts of it.

The crucial point was that the super species couldn't swim. Their body density was too high, so they would sink like metal if put into water. Therefore, the saltwater fish were probably a rare luxury for them. No wonder the baby super species had a preference for the saltwater fish over the freshwater fish during feeding, even though the meat of the saltwater fish was much firmer.

This news greatly gladdened Yao Yuan's heart. He was afraid of there being nothing these super species wanted, that like beasts they only wanted freedom to roam the jungle. Then there was bound to be conflict between them and mankind. Now that he realized that the super species had a special preference for saltwater fish and that they couldn't swim, things would be much easier. On this point alone, maybe they could survive harmoniously alongside each other. Maybe they could even be as close to humanity as cats and dogs were.

But first, Yao Yuan had to deal with the three super species before him. If he could somehow help them assimilate into human society, it would be a great addition for humanity because their natural strength could offset mankind's lack in physical power.

When everything was over, Yao Yuan ordered the medical crew to return to the shuttle. He left the baby super species with its parents. After all, there was plenty of time in the future to build a relationship.

However, something curious happened. When the shuttle prepared to lift off, the baby super species started squealing loudly. It ignored its mother's licking and crawled towards the shuttle.

Before Yao Yuan could come up with a response, the female super species picked up her child and dropped it before the shuttle entrance before retreating about 10 meters back with longing in her eyes. She stared beseechingly at Yao Yuan and at the people inside the shuttle. Her meaning was clear: she wanted them to take her baby.

It was truly mind-boggling. Never has there been a beast that would volunteer its own offspring to go off with some other parties... with the exception of mankind. When a human realizes that his or her own child could have a better life and future with other people, he or she could be willing to part with the child for his or her own sake. In other words, could the super species' intelligence have reached that level of sophistication already?

Yao Yuan scooped up the baby super species in his palms. The two super species stood there silently, watching the shuttle lift off into the air. They were still there even after the shuttle had entered the Hope.

In the next ten days, Yao Yuan would spend one hour on the ground. He would bring the baby super species and a bunch of saltwater fish to meet the two super species. Slowly but surely, the animosity they had towards Yao Yuan lowered. They even let Yao Yuan come into contact with their bodies. Even their hostility towards mankind in general had dropped. Of course, they still had a certain degree of caution, but it was more of a caution against a friendly stranger than enemy. It could be said that by then, humanity and the super species had fostered a rather unique companionship... a companionship that was built upon seafood.

On the other hand, the Ultimate Vaccine had progressed tremendously. After the successful trials on 10 different animal species and simulated human bodies, Yao Yuan made a public announcement for volunteers. The Academy needed 100 people to volunteer to take the public-use version of the Ultimate Vaccine. The 100 volunteers would spend 1 month at a seaside villa built near the new capital.

Yao Yuan's initial thought was that no one would volunteer to become what was essentially a test subject. He was prepared to ask the Barracks to give him some people, but on the morning when the announcement notices went out, about several thousand people had gathered at the 4th floor's registration point. More than 100 people contacted him via the communicator. These were the representatives, engineers, scientists and even generals. They all wanted to volunteer.

At the end of the day, there were 37,000 people who registered, while they only needed 100 volunteers.

To ensure fairness, the list was tossed into the central mainframe to be randomly picked. The selection started at 8 PM that night, it was like lottery night. 80 percent of the Hope sat in their rooms, their eyes glued to the TV screen as the ID numbers rolled on screen. Of the 100 who were selected, there was 1 representative, 1 engineer, 2 Academy interns, and a 70-year-old scientist.

After they were given shots of the public-use Ultimate Vaccine, they were kept in a germ-free room for 24 hour observation. As there was no worrying symptoms, this first batch of 100 volunteers were sent down to the new planet. They were settled into the 3-

story seaside villas.

Of course, the villas were equipped with amenities, like microwave, television and the likes as benefits for volunteering. However, to ensure the validity of the experiment, their actions were monitored 24 hours, except during private moments. They were also given daily medical checks to keep track of their antibodies count.

These 100 volunteers became something like celebrities on the Hope. Everyone prayed for their safe return, since that would also mean the public-use Ultimate Vaccine was a success. Time slowly passed. The construction robots continued working on the new capital, and the interaction between humanity and the super species continued. The 100 volunteers spent their daily lives in the villa or sunbathing. Other than the ban against wading into the sea, it was no different from a summer holiday.

A month later, the 100 volunteers returned to the Hope safely. The public-use Ultimate Vaccine was a great success. It worked perfectly for people from different racial backgrounds, ancestries, and gender.

Next would be public resettlement project!

Chapter 206: The White Resettlement Manifesto

After the volunteers returned to the Hope, everyone on board the ship was hyped because this meant that they would resettle on the new planet soon. There would be a new life waiting for them, one filled with sunlight, sea, and actual earth. With every family assigned a house of their own, the future was a beautiful dream. The topic of conversation revolved around the public inoculation and the resettlement date. They stared at the ten blocks of seaside villas that had been built with mounting anticipation.

The Hope's huge population proved to be quite a challenge... Even though the Hope's current population of 184,241 people was nothing compared to the several billion people originally on Earth, it was still a sizeable number. There were about 60,000 newborns in the past six years, so the population number was indeed that much.

For the Hope's compact government, the public resettlement posed a challenge that was as daunting as an actual war. There were simply too many things to juggle, like the manufacturing of the public-use Ultimate Vaccine, the physical check-ups prior to injection, the medical support in case of emergency during injection, the additional manpower needed to bolster the capital's defense...

It was a giant project.

Currently, about 3,400 villas had been built. They were all isolated bungalows, and every block would have 200 to 300 of

them. Of course, there were spare spaces left in between for gardens or future plans. In the future, when all 10 blocks were finished, there would be more than 5,000 villas. Of course, if the situation demanded it, new residential blocks could be set up; the capital was not lacking in space.

Currently, the 3,400 villas could only fit 3,400 families. Even if each family had 10 members, that would only bring the capacity to 34,000 people. Where would the remaining 150,000 people live?

Therefore, the public resettlement was impossible until more residential areas were completed.

Thankfully, mankind had reached the 4th industrial revolution. The construction robots were incredibly helpful in solving the issue of the lack in manpower. If 70 percent of the robots were assigned to villa construction duty, in about 6 months, the remaining residential areas would be completed. However, this led to another problem.

The problem of land ownership.

This was a sensitive subject that involved politics, countries, economics, and the future humanity! If treated rashly, it could lead to a big problem that would last for the next tens or even hundreds of years. Yao Yuan, of course, rounded a bunch of experts to hash it out. Hopefully they could provide him with a satisfactory solution.

Should the land be government-owned, privately-owned, or a mixture of both? The question was left for the experts to figure

out. On the other hand, since the public-use Ultimate Vaccine had passed its last trial successfully, it was time to allow the first batch of people to resettle the new planet. This would help ease the public's anticipation.

But who to pick? The selected ones would be able to live in villas, enjoy fresh air, feel the touch of solid earth, sun, and wind. The selection must be as fair as possible.

"I have three opinions. First, the selection must take into consideration their occupation and responsibility. For example, soldiers from the Defense Unit. We must allow family members of the Defense Unit, who have to guard the capital 24/7, to go down first. Other than that, we have to consider the technicians and engineers. There are still many projects waiting to be done in the capital. The construction robots are still sadly not fully automated, so we need the technicians and engineers down there. Naturally, there should be an allotted quota for their families as well. Of course, the quota has to include the scientists as well.

"Secondly, I feel we should continue picking using the honor medal system, hero, warrior, guardian, and defender accordingly. Of course, due to the limitation in number, we can't take all of them, so we'll set aside a specific quota which will be filled with people randomly selected from this pool.

"The third point, I think the rest of the spots should be purchasable using H-coins."

This was Yao Yuan speaking at the House of Representatives. The room was a circular hall, and Yao Yuan stood on the elevated stage

in the middle. Nearest to him were the representatives, then the authorities from the Academy, Barracks, and Workshop. After that were the public members. The hall sat about 5,000 people, and the meeting was live-broadcasted throughout the Hope. Other than the few Defense Unit soldiers who were not on the Hope, the rest tuned in.

The first two points brought up by Yao Yuan received no objections. In fact, many people predicted this would be the arrangement. However, when Yao Yuan brought up his third point, the hall erupted into pandemonium. Some of the representatives protested loudly and even parts of the public members stood up in opposition. The commotion was so overbearing that it covered what Yao Yuan said next.

"Silence!"

The speaker of the house ordered sternly after putting his microphone to maximum volume. The hall quieted immediately. The speaker stood up and eyed the room, adding, "This is the House of Representatives! Rioters will be escorted out without question! Please give our captain the respect he deserves!" Then the English gentleman sat down gently.

Yao Yuan wasn't at all flustered. He continued, "I know my third point is hard to accept by many people here because how could money buy freedom? Especially freedom on the new planet, but I have a question for everyone here and the people watching from home: are H-coins only money?"

"No! H-coins aren't just money pure and simple! I believe in the

six years after the Hope left Earth, other than the few families who had human heroes amidst them, there shouldn't be anyone sitting atop a hoard of H-coins for no good reason. In other words, the H-coins you have in your ID card represent the contribution you have provided to humanity! It is a point of honor, a reward for your blood, sweat, and tears! They are earned through hard work! Something you can be proud of!

So..."

Yao Yuan addressed the room, "Why can't H-coins be used to purchase this valuable opportunity? The more H-coins one has means that the more he or she has contributed to humanity, so why can't he or she have the priority to resettle the new planet?"

"That is why I came up with the three rules. Those that are eligible for the first 2 rules will not be taken in consideration for the third rule. That is only eligible for the normal civilians currently residing in the Hope's lower one to third floors! It is fair, open, and transparent! The whole selection and purchasing process will be put online, so anyone can monitor it at any time they wish. Cheaters will be punished by death!"

Yao Yuan took out a bound tome, adding, "All the resettlement rules will be written in this white-covered folder. At the same time, the digital version will be available online. I will single-handedly oversee the details that are added within. We will accept comments and modifications within the next 48 hours. You can do it through e-mail, phone calls, or even in person. I promise you we will take them into serious consideration. Of course, we can't promise everyone's comments will be taken into effect, but we still

wish to hear from everyone."

Yao Yuan took a pause and set down the book. "Everyone, it has been six and a half years since we left Earth. That is one hell of a long time, and now we are going to welcome a new Earth into our lives. Humanity will survive and flourish on it. We will see with our own eyes our children running through the fields as we tell them stories about this other Earth we once occupied. This is just a matter of sooner or later, so please do not fret...

"Because the future is long!"

Chapter 207: Morning

Sara woke up early in the morning. The world outside was still drenched in darkness. She took a look at the clock on the wall, it was 4:40 AM. The Resettlement Manifesto introduced a new way of reading time. Instead of following the old time from Earth, the new time would be told using the spot the Hope landed as the benchmark. Currently, it was spring on the new planet. The sun would rise when it was around 6:30 AM.

The stellar star of this system, commonly referred to as the sun out of habit, was a young star. At least according to the Academy's observation, it would have no issue burning for another billion years. This information was released through the Hope Weekly so the public could carry on living without fear of sudden solar explosion, like what happened on the meteorite base.

It was definitely too early for Sara to wake up. This was because she was used to Earth's time, so the sudden change in the time standard needed some getting used to. Even though this was already her fifth day on the new planet, she was still struggling with jet lag. She predicted she would need another 3 to 5 days to fully situate herself into this new time standard.

Then again, as the saying goes, the early bird gets the worm. It was not so bad lying on the plush mattress taking in the fresh smell of dew and seawater in the early morning. It was a sensation she had not felt in a long time. She felt like she was still dreaming and was reluctant to wake up.

Sara was part of the first batch of human settlers. She was family

to a hero medal recipient, which made her eligible for the selection according to the second rule. Luckily, she and her daughter were both selected. After taking shots of the Ultimate Vaccine, they were transported to the new planet. When the shuttle touched ground, she had a handle over her emotions, but her 9-year-old daughter, who left Earth when she was 3, lied down and rolled all over the field with gleeful cheers. She had spent 6 years on the Hope, so the only time she had seen greenies was in books, movies, or the rare occasion they were allowed on the biomes. These little brief contacts with nature couldn't rival the real thing. She picked up a bunch of flowers to make a wreath and scooped up the brown earth in her palms. She then ran to Sara to ask her where the bathroom was. The whole scene made Sara break down in tears. And she wasn't alone; most of the first batch human settlers knelt on the ground and started weeping tears of joy.

After that, Sara picked a rather compact villa as their residence. Unlike the villas which were meant for families with 3 generations, theirs was smaller in size even though it was similarly 3-storeys tall. It came with a lawn and a private garden. It was a building style Sara liked. A seaside villa like this would cost more than 100,000 US Dollars back on Earth.

The outside of the villa was designed beautifully. The private garden even came with a small vegetable patch. The lawn had access to an automated watering system, and beyond it was a miniature swimming pool. It also had a garage and an attached store. It was better than they expected.

The interior, though, was comparatively lackluster. The flooring was hardwood and there was no carpeting. The furniture was familiar-looking because they were moved there from the Hope.

Everything had a mass-produced roughness to it. Basic amenities like a fridge, air-conditioners, and oven were available, and each villa was fitted two computers. This allowed the settlers to connect to the Hope's main server to lodge opinions or request for aid whenever necessary.

In the 3 to 4 days after arrival, all the settlers, Sara included, were busy setting up their own homes. Details like moving the furniture, tossing out the unnecessary items, adding their personal touches, house-cleaning, and the likes took that long.

Today, Sara finally had the time to take a breather. This was the first time the alertness that was ever present since she got on the Hope was replaced by a sense of contentment.

"Honey, the government treats us very well, and they remember everything you did for is. They plan to build a Hero's Mountain in the near future, a place to set up the Hall of Remembrance. Everything's going well for me and our daughter; we're now living on the new planet, but dear, I really miss you..."

On that perfectly fine morning, Sara suddenly thought of her husband that lost his life on Planet Sahara. Tears streamed out of her eyes, and she buried herself in the mattress so that she wouldn't wake her daughter. Suddenly, a small hand reached out to touch her hair, she looked up immediately and saw her daughter in her pajamas staring back at her.

"Honey, what are you doing up so early? Are you hungry?" Sara hurriedly wiped her tears and pulled her daughter in for a hug.

The little girl turned her head up to look at her mother and said, with a smile, "Mom, your eyes are red. Didn't you promise you wouldn't cry again? Be nice and keep your promise, okay?"

Sara chuckled at her antics. Raised by her single mother, Penny Thompson was a precocious little girl. Even though she was only 9, she would help out around the house, and many times when Sara was feeling down, it was her daughter that cheered her up.

Sara patted her daughter lovingly on her head, adding, "Honey, what do you want to have for breakfast? How about a slice of cake with a sunny-side up? Plus a glass of hot milk."

Penny scrunched her nose, saying, "But I want fruits."

"Fruits?" Sara nodded. "There's some oranges in the fridge, but don't eat too many so early in the morning or you'll get a cold. And remember to pour yourself a glass of milk. Go ahead, honey."

Penny shook her little head. "No, Mom, I want to eat those giant purple fruits, the kind that will dye your teeth and tongue purple after you eat it."

Sara knew what she was talking about instantly. Their new neighbor, a Chinese technician, invited them over for dinner yesterday. Since they could be decades-long neighbors, Sara brought a home-made cake to the dinner. Truth be told, Sara was afraid she or her daughter might not be used to the Chinese palette, but the dinner turned out to be more sumptuous than she

predicted. Even though the man wasn't really a good cook, the mother and daughter had their fill. After the cake dessert, the Chinese teen brought out a plate of sliced-fruit for them to taste. That was the purple fruit Penny was talking about.

This was one of the fruits native to the new planet. The Academy was working overtime to identify and categorize the new planet's fruits and plants. This was one of the types they recommend. It was packed to the brim with nutrients and was harmless to those that had the vaccine injection. It also could help improve synapse formation in children, and thus was very recommended as a type of kid's snacks.

The flesh of the fruit was sweet and juicy, kind of like a purple lychee. The only downside was that they were rather rare. At least until mass cultivation, these fruits could be only found by the fringe of the forest. Of course, there was bound to be more inside the forest, but common civilians were banned from entering the jungle without supervision for fear of beast attack. Therefore, these fruits still hadn't reached the market; they were all hand-picked. The Defense Unit soldiers and certain technicians that worked around the city walls would have easier access to them.

Sara looked at Penny with a pained expression and said, "Honey, those fruits are very rare, so we can't buy them yet... How about I get you some fresh oranges instead?"

Penny's mouth turned down slightly, but she didn't make a fuss. She nodded obediently and followed Sara to the kitchen. After a quick breakfast, she was her old, happy self again.

Penny said, "Mom, when do you think Uncle Liu Qing Yang will invite us over for chinese food again? He cooks so much better than mom, and I like the idea of having so many dishes to pair with a bowl of white rice."

Sara smiled inwardly and pinched her daughter on her nose. "Then how about mommy starts leaning how to cook chinese food from today onward? But Penny has to promise she'll be mommy's little helper in the kitchen, okay?"

Penny stood up in her chair and cheered. After Sara told her to sit back down, their doorbell rang. It was about 7 AM. The sun had risen, but it was still rather early; who would come knocking so early in the morning?

Sara felt her guard go up, but then if it was someone or something dangerous, the Defense Unit that had a 24 hour patrol would step in, so she quickly went to get the door.

The door opened to reveal a shy Liu Qing Yang, who stood on her doorstep with a box of purple fruits in his arm. For some reason, Sara felt her heart skip a beat...

Chapter 208: Funny Things on the Forum

Even compared to life in the villa, life on the Hope wasn't too bad either. Other than the lack of fresh air, sun, and plants, the people on the Hope had a more convenient lifestyle. There were a lot more amenities available, and there was a market street where they could go shopping using H-coins instead of being forced to order them online.

However, there was one thing that wasn't common for every household on the Hope: the computer.

While every villa on the new planet was fitted with 2 computers, only the computer scientists and engineers had access to home computers on the Hope. Normal citizens couldn't purchase one even if they wanted to. The reason was because the Academy was still working on the supermagnetic processor, a product of the 4th industrial revolution similar to the one used in the central mainframe.

Regrettably, the time mankind had spent in the 4th revolution was still too short. Even though supermagnetic computer could be manufactured already, the required cost was simply too high. The specialized parts used in manufacturing greatly hiked up the production cost. Therefore, other than the settlers who needed to maintain a constant communication link to the Hope, the Hope was still using old computers salvaged from Earth, and the government wouldn't be selling manufactured computers any time soon.

Therefore, the only way to access the government server on the

Hope to catch up on the latest news was through the internet cafés. That was why the cafés were the favorite spots for teens to hang out in after work. Of course, not all of them were there to get government information. Most, if not all, were there to study or to read, and surfing the government site was something they did on rare occasions.

However, in the past 5 days, the amount of people visiting the official government websites and forums had increased tremendously. It had attracted even some elders to visit the internet cafes. The key change was the first batch of settlers. In 5 days on the new planet, they had taken a lot of pictures to share on the forum. These pictures were wildly different from the official promotional banners; they had an everyday feel to them. There were pictures of children running happily on the field, grandparents fishing idly by the river side, and even pictures of families around a campfire.

People on the Hope were excited even though they weren't experiencing these things themselves, as there was that vicarious link. Furthermore, they would be experiencing all these things in the near future.

Simultaneously, the official asking price for the accommodation near the new capital was out. Depending on the size and location, the price for a villa, furniture included, was about 18,000 to 20,000 H-coins.

Honestly, the price wasn't high. If converted to US dollars, it would be around 10,000 to 20,000 dollars. This included the permanent land ownership, so technically speaking, it really

wasn't that expensive.

At the same time, the government introduced the 50-year 0 interest loan. The condition was, if the loan wasn't cleared after the 50 years, the government would confiscate the land and everything on it. The loan broke down to having to repay 20 H-coins per month, which really wasn't much.

Actually, according to Guang Zhen and a few other higher authorities' opinions, since the construction of the villas didn't really cost much due to the fact that the construction robots pretty much did all the work, the villas could be given away for free.

However, Yao Yuan and another group of experts had another opinion in mind, which was contribution and reward should come hand-in-hand. If the government gave away the villas for free, it would cultivate a society that would depend on governmental hand-outs. It would create a culture of laziness. Until the day where humanity no longer needed to work but could focus solely on recreational activities like hobbies, arts, learning, or research, there would not be governmental freebies.

This life of recreation wouldn't arrive until the end of the 4th industrial revolution, at least according to the Academy's projection. Before then, mankind had to work for their meals, so the 50 year loan was absolutely necessary and logical.

The loan, though, was well-accepted by the public. You have to pay for what you want, that's only fair. They would be worried that if the villas were free, the unfairness of it all would be too obvious. What about the people who had worked hard for their H-

coins and the manifesto's third rule?

Even though a 50 year loan was indeed a bit long, the people on the Hope were all well-educated individuals, so they could do their own analyses and come up with the conclusion that the location of the villas were not only near the capital but also near the sea. This meant that they had a great environment that was worthy of investment. In the future where the human population will break through the billion mark, the villas will be a veritable sign of wealth and status. It meant that that family was one of the first to settle on the new planet.

Won't that sound impressive?

Therefore, there was no complaints about the 20 H-coin monthly repayment. It was an amount even the lowest of workers could satisfy. In other words, it was the biggest benefit the Hope had ever given its citizens.

Lee Jun was scrolling through the forum and typed on his messenger, "Bro, didn't you say you will post some pictures of a pretty woman? Why I can't find them?"

On the other end, Qing Yang replied with a sly smile. "It's because your computer is delaying, okay? You're not using the supermagnetic computer, so get used to it. By the way, her name is Sara Thompson, and she has a daughter called Penny..."

Lee Jun frowned. "Dude, you're pursuing a widow? Aren't you still a virgin? Why are you setting your mark so high? Wait... a

westerner? I had no idea your tastes were so international."

Qing Yang responded, "She's a good woman, so I don't care if she's a widow. The point is I like her. So, have you seen the pictures?"

Lee Jun refreshed the page and finally, in the settler's diary column, he saw the pictures uploaded by Qing Yang's ID. There were a lot of pictures of a family dinner. Other than his friend, there was indeed a beautiful, busty, and blonde woman in the frame. Beside her was a cute little girl, about 8 or 9 years old. She had a ponytail and was munching on the fruit the Academy dubbed the purple plum. She was giving the camera a wide smile.

"F*ck, dude you're tasting both mom and daughter at the same time? Such an appetite!" Lee Jun typed.

Qing Yang's reply came immediately. "Could you stop with jokes like that? It's really not funny. Seriously though, what do you think about the girl? Do you think my dad will kill me if I bring her home?"

Lee Jun answered after giving it some thought, "I don't think he will. After all, this is no longer Earth. Didn't your dad just praise several European scientists a few days ago? Furthermore, didn't I hear that the government is encouraging mixed marriages since there are way too many of us Asian dudes to go around? So you see, if you marry her, you'll even get some government benefits. So go for it!"

"F*ck you," Qing Yang responded jokingly, then he continued, "After these few days of contact, I really think she's an excellent woman; hardworking, loves her daughter, and is so pretty on top of that. I think I'll really try to pursue her."

"I wish you the best of luck, but seriously... the reason you're chasing her is because you like big breasts, right? Don't think I don't know your tastes; I've screened through the collection you have in your hard-disc. Come on, don't be shy," Lee Jun teased.

Qing Yang gave him a 'sweat' emoticon and no explanation. After Lee Jun finished looking through the album, he asked, "How's life down there? Damn, based on the pictures, it does look like heaven."

Qing Yang's interest returned. "It is like heaven downright. Just breathing the air alone can make you feel refreshed. I won't get into the technical stuff, like oxygen percentages and all that, but everything here is truly something else. Bro, don't be envious; it's your own fault for taking the military industry course when I asked you to take architecture and robotics with me. Good, now eat your heart out."

Lee Jun burst out laughing. He replied, "Dude, I see your moment in paradise is ending soon too, okay? Construction of the capital and the second batch of residential area, I bet you won't have the time to go home, much less chase after the girl. Furthermore, not all is bad with military industry. I'll be going down there the day after tomorrow as well, as they need me for the experiment on new electromagnetic weaponry. I have half a month of holiday coming up, and I have the chance to explore the jungle with the Black Star

Troopers, then we'll see who the envious one is..."

This kind of conversation was happening all over the Hope. After gaining contact with the first batch of settlers, the people still remaining on the Hope were inspired to work harder. Everyone was waiting for the second selection with bated breath.

The future was so exciting, and everyone couldn't wait for it to arrive!

Chapter 209: Tame

Yao Yuan sat on the ground and opened his palm to reveal the snow-white baby super species that was rolling happily around in it. From time to time, it would use its front paw to pull at Yao Yuan's fingers, as if begging Yao Yuan to play with it.

The baby super species had opened its eyelids. It had a pair of innocent, emerald-colored eyes. The intensity of the adult super species' eyes was absent. When it first opened its eyes, it easily tore through its 'room' that was made up of reinforced glass. Then, it went on to wreak havoc all over the germ-free room.

The researchers were too afraid to barge recklessly into it without protection. They waited patiently for Yao Yuan and the rest of the Black Star Troopers to arrive. After the door was opened, the first thing the baby creature fixed its eyes on was Yao Yuan and the troopers behind him.

It chirped joyfully when it saw them. Simultaneously, it nodded its head up and down, asking for food. From the looks of things, it had adopted them as its parents.

From then onwards, the little thing had gotten itself attached to Yao Yuan. It had gotten to a stage where it would throw a tantrum when Yao Yuan was not around. Of course, it wouldn't attack people, but its power of destruction was not to be trifled with. It had even bitten its way through the germ-free room when the researchers weren't looking. It was crazy... the wall was several inches thick of reinforced alloy!

Because of this little accident, the baby super species had gained contact to the Hope's air. The scientists had no choice but to give it a shot of the newly created new planet reverse Ultimate Vaccine. However, its durable skin made this task impossible. Finally, the last resort was to inject the shot into its tongue during feeding time. The super species was so spooked that it curled itself into Yao Yuan's arms and refused to pull its head up.

That day, Yao Yuan had brought the baby super species to the edge of the forest again. By now, the super species had gained a common name. It was six-legged black dragon, Black Dragon in short. This was because it had the appearance of a six-legged crawling lizard. Even though the physical appearance between the lizard-like super species and dragon was different, from its color and image, it was a close enough nickname.

The two adult Black Dragons had been waiting when the shuttle that carried Yao Yuan and the baby dragon arrived. The Black Dragons immediately reared up their heads. They first sniffed Yao Yuan and then turned their heads towards the baby dragon.

Even though the baby dragon was very attached to Yao Yuan, it knew instinctually that the two adult Black Dragons were its actual parents, so it didn't make a fuss no matter how much they licked it. Then, many boxes of saltwater fish were brought down from the shuttle. As one of the boxes passed by the male Black Dragon, he stuck his head into it, picked a large fish out, and started munching on it.

Yao Yuan stood aside, watching the scene with a smile. Then a frown appeared on his face because he noticed something peculiar.

The coloration of the two adult Black Dragons seemed to have faded. Instead of pure black, they had reached a shade of dark brown, or was Yao Yuan imagining it?

No, Yao Yuan was sure it was deep black color before, so why the color change? Could it have to do with the change in their diet? Or was this the way they showed their happy emotions when they saw the boxes of saltwater fish?

Yao Yuan couldn't figure out the answer, so he decided to ask the Academy to look deeper into this. He had another purpose for being there that day.

Yao Yuan activated his Anima power and spoke, "You guys can understand me, right? How about this: if you do, then please nod your heads up and down. If not... then, well, this is pretty much pointless."

After Yao Yuan's statement, the two Black Dragons, which had consumed a ginormous fish and pushed out spherical excrements, lifted their heads and stared at Yao Yuan curiously. However, before they could give any response, the baby dragon playing in Yao Yuan's palms started bobbing its small head. After that, the two adult Black Dragons did the same. Not only did they bob their heads, they waved their tails and front paws up and down too.

Yao Yuan continued joyously, "Today, I'm going to take you guys for a tour of my people's capital. Of course, there are many humans like me there, so please do not attack them. Unlike me, they can't withstand your aggression. Do you understand? Same old rules, nod your head if you do."

It was still the baby dragon that nodded first. The adult dragons seemed to be confused by the lengthy statement. After Yao Yuan repeated himself multiple times, they finally nodded knowingly.

Truth be told, Yao Yuan was still very nervous. After all, these six-legged Black Dragons were too powerful; if they decided to run amok in the human capital, then it would be a real disaster. However, this had to be done if the Black Dragons were to be part of human society. He wanted humans and the dragons to live harmoniously alongside each other. Yao Yuan's plan was to eventually tame and breed a platoon of Black Dragons. They would be better than the Black Star Troopers at ground combat. Furthermore, with their intelligence, Yao Yuan believed they might even understand human language after prolonged exposure to humanity.

Of course, for the sake of safety, Yao Yuan didn't lead the two Black Dragons to the residential area but the construction site. The human presence there was weaker since the majority of action came from the construction robots. Yao Yuan could also have a firsthand experience watching the Black Dragons' reaction towards human cities and creations.

Carrying the baby dragon in his hand, Yao Yuan led the two adult Black Dragons to the outer walls of the human capital. They stayed a few meters behind Yao Yuan, and further behind were about 10 alert troopers. They eventually arrived at the construction site where hundreds of robots bustled about. The two Black Dragons sniffed their surroundings curiously. They seemed to understand Yao Yuan's intention. They started wandering around, trying to take everything in.

After a while, the two Black Dragons gave Yao Yuan a low growl. Even though Yao Yuan couldn't really understand what that meant, he led them further ahead. All along the way, there was a series of construction sites. The capital had to be built from the ground up. Eventually, they ran into technicians and engineers that were there to oversee the construction robots since the robots didn't have the necessary AI to be fully automated yet.

This was the gut-wrenching moment for Yao Yuan and the troopers because men and women without space armor started appearing around them. Even a slight bump from the Black Dragon could claim their lives. If the situation demanded it, Yao Yuan wouldn't hesitate to kill the dragons. After all, the lives of mankind were still more important than animals.

Thankfully, such a situation didn't present itself. The Black Dragons were initially guarded around other humans, but once they caught a whiff of these people's smells that were carried by the wind, they visibly relaxed. From the smell, they seemed to have concluded that these people were the same type as Yao Yuan, so they let their guard down. Yao Yuan and the troopers let out great sighs of relief.

The tour continued until it was dinner time. The technicians and engineers left the construction sites in groups. Before they retired for the night, they input easy commands into the robots to be carried out in the night. These were easy assignments, like laying the road. Yao Yuan was ready to lead the Black Dragons back into the forest. Yao Yuan was more than satisfied with how their first tour went.

Right then, an 8-year-old European girl ran out of the construction site. Chasing her was an Asian teen. They were playing some sort of a hide-and-seek game. The girl was running away with her head turned, pulling faces at the man. She didn't pay attention to where she was heading and rammed into Yao Yuan's back. The girl fell to the floor with a heavy thud, and her hands and legs were bleeding with fresh wounds. She started wailing.

Before the anxious Asian boy got near, Yao Yuan had already turned to look at the little girl. However, the two Black Dragons were even faster than he was. They had surrounded the little girl, and the female dragon was licking the girl's wounds.

Yao Yuan felt his heart chill. The thing that he feared the most was about to happen. Even though the dragons had killed a trooper before, that was done out of self-defense. Yao Yuan felt that they could still be tamed because they had not had human flesh yet. Furthermore, they had a certain respect towards human beings since they were harmed by one before. After several decades of cultivation, the dragons shouldn't pose much danger to humanity anymore.

However, that would all be useless if the dragons partook in human meat. The two Black Dragons had to be put down for taking a human life. After that, one couldn't be sure they wouldn't get addicted to human flesh, so they couldn't be left to survive!

This little girl was meat at the tips of their tongues... There was no way this wouldn't end horribly.

Yao Yuan pulled out his sawblade and the troopers cocked their rifles, but the two Black Dragons didn't launch any attack. They circled the little girl to lick her wounds. Tickled by their serrated tongue, the little girl started laughing. She even stood up to give the female dragon's head a hug.

The female dragon licked her small face genially, showing zero aggression...

Chapter 210: Hope Landing

The incident with the super species did make many break out in cold sweat. The result, though, was indeed heartening. The girl ended up giggling and pinched the female dragon's face to play with it. The female super species allowed her to do this without growling or roaring. It wasn't until the girl wanted to climb on top of the dragon that Yao Yuan came forth to stop her.

After apologizing to the Asian teen for spooking them, Yao Yuan called the medic to bandage the girl up. When the girl mentioned she liked purple plums, Yao Yuan promised he would have someone send a box over as an apology.

The teen had recognized Yao Yuan. Even though he was in space armor, the only person that wore red space armor in all of the Hope was Captain Yao Yuan. However, he was surprised Yao Yuan would be so friendly and apologize even though the blame didn't exactly fall on him. However, the teen was still on his toes during his interaction with Yao Yuan, giving Yao Yuan the respect he was due.

The same couldn't be said of the little girl. She saw the baby dragon cupped in Yao Yuan's palms. The baby dragon, which was the size of a small kitten, blinked curiously at her when it poked its head up from Yao Yuan's palms. The girl immediately fell in love with the cute, white ball of fur.

"Uncle, can I see the small animal in your hands? He's so cute. Wow, it has six legs." The little girl sidled up to Yao Yuan when he was engaged in conversation with the teen. She could see the baby

dragon when she was further away, but she couldn't see anything when she was near. After all, Yao Yuan was more than 3 feet tall when he was in the space armor, and the little girl barely reach his knees, so how could she possibly see the baby dragon in his palms?

Yao Yuan squatted down, but even so, he was still taller than the little girl. He lowered his hands. The baby dragon clung to Yao Yuan's fingers using its two front claws and nodded its head at the girl. The emerald in its eyes shone brilliantly.

The little girl was ecstatic. She carefully pushed out her finger to touch the baby dragon's head. She felt like she had been touched by ice when contact was made. Then she used her fingers to lightly caress the baby dragon's body, and the baby dragon closed its eyes like it was enjoying the light massage. Then it used its front claws to hug her fingers and used its slightly spiky tongue to lick it. The girl giggled happily from the tickle.

And thus ended the super species' first contact with human beings. Even though it wasn't perfect, it was already much better than what Yao Yuan had expected. It was truly a pleasant surprise.

Things with the super species and settlers had made things on the Hope extremely busy. Not only Yao Yuan, but pretty much everyone had a long to-do list waiting to be completed.

Yao Yuan's to-do list comprised of the Hope's eventual landing, the human country's constitution, the selection of the second set of settlers, testing of the Defense Unit's new weaponry...

In other words, the one hour Yao Yuan allocated to spend bonding with the super species was his own precious resting period as well. However, these were things that he had to do, the issue of landing being the most pressing.

This was caused by the appearance of the first batch of settlers. They lived in the villas and ate the new planet's various fruits, vegetables, meat, and fish hunted by the Defense Unit daily. Of course, each of them had their own assigned occupations. Engineers, scientists, and technicians bustled about busily almost every waking hours of their lives. Families of honor medal bearers and those that purchased the slot through H-coins found jobs through the government as well. These jobs included taking care of the construction robots, cleaning the food ingredients, or cooking the daily meals for the construction site workers. After all, they needed to pay for their housing, so working was compulsory.

Even so, their lifestyle was the thing of envy on the Hope. The first batch of settlers only had 16,000 people, that was 10 percent of the Hope's 160,000 total population.

Therefore, even though everyone knew that the second selection list was coming in about 2 months' time, the desire for the new planet wouldn't die down. One person commented on the official government forum asking for the Hope to land on the surface. That way, even if they weren't selected, they could enjoy the nature and perhaps go for a walk around the landing spot early every morning.

Surprisingly, the comment gained enormous traction. The Hope Weekly did a survey on it, and other than those who were scarred

by the alien attack, almost 95 percent of the Hope was in support of the idea.

Because of this pressure, the manufacturing speed for the public-use Ultimate Vaccine had increased. If necessary, the vaccine for all 160,000 people could be done in 2 days. This included the vaccine for the animals and plants on the Hope to prevent them from contaminating the new planet's existing ecosystem.

After a long meeting with the Academy and Barracks, Yao Yuan ultimately decided for the Hope to land on the new planet. After all, the Hope couldn't last forever floating aboveground. They would land half a month after the appearance of the first settler batch, which was in 5 days.

After hearing this news, a group of experts approached Yao Yuan with a proposal. If the Hope was landing, why not use the day itself to host the human government's founding ceremony? After all, they had the military power to host it. The Defense Unit was training daily, and the Troopers were impressive in their space armor. Even though there were no tanks, weren't the space combat jets 100 times more powerful than tanks?

The administrative reassignment could wait, and the governing policies could temporarily use the ones upheld by the Hope. The key to first host the founding ceremony was to calm human hearts. Also, wouldn't it be momentous if the founding ceremony was done on the day the Hope landed on the new planet?

Of course, this proposal was greatly welcomed by a series of people, like Guang Zhen, but Yao Yuan had his reservations. First

was the lack of preparation. How could something as important as the founding ceremony be rushed? Everything must be perfectly in place.

Second was the issue of ground siege engines.

The founding ceremony's purpose was to instill confidence in the citizens' hearts; it was to let the citizens know that they were well-protected by their government! Both soldiers from the Defense Unit and Black Star Troopers had to appear in the marching ceremony, there was no denying that. Of course, the Space Combat Jet Prototype 003 had to make an appearance as well. However, since they had already landed, it would be weird if there wasn't a powerful on-the-ground siege engine. It might cause a portion of the public to worry.

With the 4th industrial revolution, there were naturally siege engines that were more powerful than tanks, including a super long-ranged bomb tank that was equipped with large Gaussian and automatic cannons. There were also blueprints for a robot army, and these could all be a reality. Other than that, humanity had a secret weapon, which was the anti-gravity technology.

Combining all of these, the Workshop could create a contraption that could float off the ground, had a polymerized reactor as its power source to support its mobility and supermagnetic shield, as well as a large amount of high power Gaussian weaponries... A Heaven's Cloud!

This was the contraption Yao Yuan wanted to create the most. It could carry at least 500 soldiers and drop Gaussian bombs down

from a high elevation. The bomb barrage would have one-fifth the power of the Hope's own bomb barrage. If needed, the platform could also descend to the surface to act as temporary base. If there was one or two of these, humanity wouldn't fear the revival of the flesh alien or even the combined assault of 1,000 super species.

Therefore, Yao Yuan vetoed the founding ceremony; it could happen when everything was ready. However, the landing was still going to happen. 5 days later, the Hope would land on a plateau 10 kilometers away from the capital. A perimeter was set up 50 meters from the Hope. Other than the two known Black Dragons, any other animals that could pose a threat would be hunted down immediately.

Therefore, over the next 5 days, everyone on the Hope was given the Ultimate Vaccine and was informed of the Hope's landing date and time. Everyone prayed for the landing to happen safely.

On the fifth day, new planet time 10 AM, with Yao Yuan's order, the Hope started descending to the planet's surface. Everyone crowded the windows, watching the sea and forest inch closer to their faces. Eventually, they could see the sunlight rippling off the water's surface and butterfly-like things that flitted among the flowers.

Following a slight shake, everyone on the Hope cried out in whooping cheers. The cheers were echoed by the Defense Unit soldiers and the first settlers that were on the surface.

The Hope had finally landed on the new planet!

Chapter 211: 17 Black Dragons

The overall mood on the Hope was one of joy after the ship landed, even though there wasn't a luxurious villa waiting for each person. The curfew didn't dampen the spirits either. After the landing of the Hope, the construction of the capital continued. Project number one was the construction of a giant plaza in the middle of the capital; it would be named Human Plaza.

The decorations, wiring, size, foundation, and the location of surrounding buildings were given to the expert architects to figure out. When Yao Yuan picked them from Earth, he honestly didn't expect them to be much use, and in fact, they weren't as useful as the scientists, but at moments like this, they were instrumental.

All these issues could be solved with enough time and effort. The one mind-boggling detail was the several statues Yao Yuan wanted to set up on the plaza.

Since this plaza was to signify humanity's presence on a new planet, it had to be perfect and detailed. Yao Yuan wouldn't settle for work that cut corners, especially when it came to the statues that were to be built. The House of Representatives suggested building 5 statues overall, 2 human statues, male and female, each situated at the north and south side of the plaza; the east side of the plaza would have the statue of a deep blue planet, representing Earth; a statue of a minimized Hope on the west side; and lastly a statue of Yao Yuan in the middle. This proposal was vetoed by Yao Yuan. He counter-offered to have the statues represent humanity's heroes instead.

These heroes were the men and women who had sacrificed themselves in the 6 years the Hope had left Earth. There must be an equal representation of men and women and people of all skin colors. The theme would be one of remembrance and appreciation.

The statues fell into the domain of fact since they couldn't be done by machines. However, when Yao Yuan left Earth, he didn't bring along any artists. Even though art was an important part of human civilization, it was more of a want than a need.

The government was unable to find a single artist from the original 120,000 people who left Earth on the Hope. It was quite a headache for the government.

As a last resort, 2,000 teachers who had relations to art were selected to handle this momentous project. They were tasked to figure out a blue print and create the 5 statues while the foundations for the statues were being built on the plaza. Whenever the statues were ready, they could be attached to the foundations.

In conclusion, life for humanity was busy but rewarding. The new human capital slowly came into shape, and the people weren't given much time for recreation. The only daily breaks were the morning before work and dusk after work. The fruits, vegetables, and wild game on the new planet were great luxuries. The fact that there were only 800 people in the gathering team but the gathered product could feed 180,000 people went to prove how untouched the new planet was. The new planet was filled with nature's bounty.

Of course, humanity, who once felt the pain of pollution, knew the dangers of overfishing and overhunting, so they had a rotation method. The gathering spots were different every time. With the transport shuttle's aid, it was easy travelling within a several hundred meters radius. After all, the Hope only had 180,000 people, and 60,000 of them were children, so the planet could provide more than enough to feed humanity.

The wealth of resources kickstarted the progress in the food industry. The French, Chinese, and Japanese approached the government for business permits. Thus, in the Hope residential levels, a lot of French, American, Chinese, Japanese, and other local cuisine appeared. Thanks to the increased demand from these eateries, middle-men who would purchase raw ingredients from government to clean, categorize, prepare, and ship them to the various eateries also appeared...

With the government's direct and indirect aid and encouragement, the entire human society was resurging at an impressive speed. Mankind was projected to become a full-fledged powerful race in the next decade, where the shadow of the helpless space nomadic race it once was would be long erased.

"Hmm? Saturday and Sunday? What about them?"

Yao Yuan was signing a document on the Defense Unit's weapons and armors upgrade when a few representatives and calendrical science experts approached him with a fairly weird question.

One of the experts responded, "The problem is we can't apply them to this new planet. First, there are 27 hours to a day here,

then 410 days to a year with 4 changing seasons. Actually 5 if we are to count the drought in the middle where even the sea will dry up. This complicated time issue throws the calendar we are familiar with into complete chaos. Since the second selection for settlers is coming up, almost everyone on the Hope has eschewed their weekly days off. Furthermore, they can't take a break even if they want to, as there are simply too many things to be done. This would be fine if we were back on Earth, but the new time issue on this new planet means that almost everyone is overworked."

Yao Yuan considered it and realized that the expert was telling the truth. Since the construction robots' progress was incredibly fast, salaries couldn't be divided by sites but rather by working days. The workers would fill up a form to show that they wanted to work that day and the government would assign them to sites that were understaffed.

Therefore, taking a day off meant a day without salary. To rush the construction progress, the government was handing out double pay, and since the second selection was coming soon, everyone was trying to earn H-coins to purchase the villa slots. Everyone was indeed overworked since the longer daytime on the new planet meant that the daily working hours were also longer.

Yao Yuan proposed, "Then starting from tomorrow, there will be a designated five days holiday, let's call it Landing Anniversary. We will celebrate it every year. There will be no working for all other than the Black Star Troopers and the Defense Unit. The people are allowed to spend their leisure time in the green area, but not beyond the warning yellow lines. Other than that, we'll move back to the regular working schedule after this. Normal days off on Saturday and Sunday, hmm, we'll give half salary on those

days off, which is the normal salary."

Barbie, who was beside him, jotted everything down. She typed and printed the document out for Yao Yuan to sign right after. After Yao Yuan authorized it, the document was passed back to Barbie, who would then hand it over to Hope Weekly's office. The details would be broadcasted on the 7 PM nightly news. The details would also be posted online on the Hope's official website. The system was streamlined.

The people who were there left with a satisfied smile. To be fair, they were affected by the hectic working schedule as well, so more days off was a good thing.

After they left, Yao Yuan stretched lazily and scanned the small stack of papers on his table, then he turned to look outside the window. It was a piece of blue sea.

"Maybe... Taking a rest is not a bad idea after all. Didn't Bo Li say she wanted to see the ocean? I should live up to my promise."

Yao Yuan smiled. The accumulated pressure from setting up the new planet was pressing down hard on him. He was definitely the most hardworking individual in all of the Hope. Maybe he too should give himself that 5 days holiday. When he considered that option, Bo Li's expressionless but lovely face floated into his mind.

As Yao Yuan went to pick up the communicator to give Bo Li a call, the communicator rang. He picked it up and Guang Zhen's screaming voice came through.

"Yao Yuan! This is bad! We have 17 Black Dragons coming our way. I've charted their journey and I believe they are coming for our capital! They will reach the capital's defense wall in about 10 minutes!

Yao Yuan cursed and ordered Guang Zhen to gather the Black Star Troopers. Then he had the Hope activate all its surveillance devices and prepare the weaponry needed to take down 17 Black Dragons. Finally, he rushed to the ordnance warehouse to put on his red space armor.

When Yao Yuan arrived at the walls, 151 troopers and Guang Zhen, who was also in space armor, were already there. They were waiting for the 17 Black Dragons to appear from the forest, and stationed behind the troopers were 500 Defense Unit soldiers setting up camp.

Yao Yuan only managed to say hi to Guang Zhen before 2 adult Black Dragons materialized among the trees. Behind them were 15 other six-legged Black Dragons!

However, when Yao Yuan saw the Black Dragons, he sighed in great relief. Anticipation rose in his heart.

That was because the scales of the two leading Black Dragons weren't as dark as the others; they had more of a brownish hue, and the bigger among the two had 5 legs.

Yes, they were the Black Dragon couple that had disappeared for

the past few days!

Chapter 212: Domination

Six-legged Black Dragons.

There are special species found on the new planet. They have unimaginably strong body strength, stronger than a trooper in space armor. If put on old Earth, tanks would be like toys for them. Without weapons of mass destruction, Earth's original military wouldn't be able to do anything against them.

17 Black Dragons, the number was awe-inspiring. Even with the whole Black Star Troopers pursuing them, if the combat was done in the forest, at least 50 percent of the troopers would have to lay down their lives to kill them all, that was, if they didn't escape into another forest first.

That was why Guang Zhen had such a huge reaction. On a separate note, as the Hope's official second-in-command since Yao Yuan openly announced Guang Zhen was his successor, Guang Zhen also held the post of the Hope's sub-captain, the Hope's Defense Unit's commanding general, Black Star Trooper's vice-captain, and the Hope government's vice cabinet minister (Yao Yuan wasn't crowned the president yet), so Guang Zhen was the go-to person on the Hope if Yao Yuan wasn't available. Guang Zhen's traditional mindset that raised a few red flags in the House of Representatives aside, for a man of his position, mobilizing an army troop for defense was easy.

Therefore, when Yao Yuan arrived, other than the Black Star Troopers whom Yao Yuan asked to gather, there was a temporary camp being set up by the Defense Unit. The piece of forest land was

right at the fringe of the new capital's walls. It couldn't be broken through, because the line of defense represented humanity's military strength. Not even a bird was allowed through!

The only exception was the Black Dragons because they were the only species not threatened by the Defense Unit's 4th revolution weaponry. Only the Black Star Troopers could pit themselves against them. Since the Defense Unit couldn't go with the offense, they opted to set up camp for defense.

Luckily, the 17 Black Dragons weren't hostile, or at least not openly hostile.

When the 17 Black Dragons appeared from the forest, not only were the Defense Unit and Black Star Troopers affected, the same happened over at the opposite camp as well. Other than the two leading Black Dragons, the other 15 Black Dragons went into attack or defense poses, they gnashed their teeth, and tensed their bodies. It was a fight or flight response spooked by the large presence of humanity.

But after a low hiss from the leading, brown-scaled Black Dragons, the commotion among the Dragons quieted down. However, they continued fidgeting, obviously under unease.

At this moment, Yao Yuan was reminded of the things Ivan and other biologists told him about the six-legged Black Dragons. This super species was most likely a communal animal. This could be observed from how the Black Dragon pair cared for their young. Unlike bears or tigers, who survived in isolation, the Black Dragons were more like wolves or horses, or in other words, could

be tamed.

However, due to their high food intake, they had to separate into their own territories. Nevertheless, they must have ways to maintain communication. Like how there is an alpha in a pack of wolves, it must be the same for the Black Dragons as well.

Yao Yuan predicted as much before it was confirmed by Ivan and the other biologists. They were no longer on Earth, but animal behavior seemed to be universal across the universe. Now that 17 of them appeared at once in a group, it indirectly confirmed their assumption. Furthermore, when the Black Dragon couple hissed, the rest showed signs of deference towards them by listening to their commands. It also proved that they could be tamed.

However, the fact that the 'five-legged' Black Dragon was the alpha came as a surprise to Yao Yuan. Even for wolves, if the original alpha was injured, it would be dethroned. But the male Black Dragon, despite losing a limb, was still the leader.

Could it be... caused by the color change in its scale?

Now was not the time for theory-crafting. After Yao Yuan saw the Black Dragon couple stop the group of Black Dragons with their growls, he made eye contact with Ying, Ebon, Liu Bai, and the rest of the Black Star Unit, then he made a hand signal at Guang Zhen. Guang Zhen stayed to commandeer the Defense Unit and Black Star Troopers while Yao Yuan approached the Black Dragon couple with the rest of the Black Star Unit.

Commotion among the 15 Black Dragons started instantly. The largest among them prepped its body, unleashed a drumlike war cry and launched itself at Yao Yuan.

However, before it could get far enough, a brown shadow knocked it down from its side. In the blink of an eye, the larger 5-legged male Black Dragon had its entire body on top of it, pinning it down, while the female had her teeth on its throat. She could claim its life at any moment.

The downed Black Dragon chirped for mercy while wagging its tail and six appendages. It reminded Yao Yuan of how the baby super species asked for food. Gradually, the male Black Dragon disengaged himself. He didn't pay the down dragon much attention but refocused all his energy at Yao Yuan's group, which was approaching.

Yao Yuan spoke into the internal communicator, "Don't worry, but be on guard. Unless we're actively threatened, we can't be the party that shows aggression first."

"Yes, Sir," the Black Star unit replied in unison.

When Yao Yuan was 10 meters away from the male Black Dragon, he disengaged himself from the group and stopped before Yao Yuan. He allowed Yao Yuan to pat all over himself. Yao Yuan sighed in relief because for a creature like the Black Dragon, allowing someone else to pat its body represented a sign of friendliness.

At the same time, the female Black Dragon also sidled to Yao Yuan's side. She circled and sniffed the air around Yao Yuan. Then she nodded her head at Yao Yuan and wagged her tail. Yao Yuan immediately called Guang Zhen to send over the fish and the baby Black Dragon.

The wait lasted for about 10 minutes, but the 15 Black Dragons started getting raucous. Especially when they saw Yao Yuan inch closer to their group, their guard heightened. If not for the Black Dragon couple's presence, there would have been a bloodbath.

Finally, a few shuttles arrived at the scene. After the first batch of saltwater fish was laid on the floor, all the Black Dragons seemed to submerge into a state of frenzy. Under the guidance of the Black Dragon couple, each of them picked up a large fish and went to town on it. After a while, all of them tossed up their heads and roared at the floor. The floor rocked with their drumlike calls. It was a display of excitement.

Suddenly, the female Black Dragon bit Yao Yuan on his feet. The Black Star Unit behind Yao Yuan quickly drew their weapons, but Yao Yuan waved for them to stand down, telling them he wasn't being attacked. He followed the female Black Dragon and they stopped before the largest Black Dragon among the group. He was larger than the five-legged male Black Dragon; it was obvious he was the heavy hitter among the group.

It dropped the fish it was eating, straightened itself, and assumed a fighting stance. Simultaneously, it gave out a war cry. The female Black Dragon extricated herself from the confrontation and left Yao Yuan there.

"...I see. Even though a possible truce could be formed on our offering of saltwater fish, you're unwilling to bow down to a weaker race?" Yao Yuan understood immediately. After all, if humanity proved to be too weak of an opponent, the Black Dragons could raid the capital for fish whenever they wanted.

Since that was the case...

Yao Yuan pulled out his sawblade and rushed towards the largest Black Dragon like a ball of flame. There was no mercy in the animal world. The iron rule was the survival of the fittest!

Several minutes later, a wounded Yao Yuan stepped on the broken body of the Black Dragon. After all, this wasn't the jungle, so the Black Dragon had no geological advantage. In close combat, the Black Dragon's scales still weren't tough enough for Yao Yuan's sawblade. Plus, Yao Yuan was a level 2 All-Rounder.

Lying supine on the floor, the Black Dragon chirped weakly and did the gesture that it did when it was begging for food. The rest of the Black Dragon did the same. The gesture made it look as if they were genuflecting before humanity.

"With the saltwater fish as bait and food, as well as our combat prowess, the Black Dragons will heed our commands at least until I'm old or I die. This means that we have at least 100 years to tame them."

Yao Yuan said satisfactorily. The 17 Black Dragons could be

trained immediately, supplementing the capital's defense. In the future, the amount of Black Dragons under humanity's command would only increase. Eventually, they would live side by side with humanity, like dogs and cats...

A new human companion, the six-legged Black Dragon!

Chapter 213: Holiday and Invitation

Things with the Black Dragons were going smoothly. They were fed fish every day and this was also bonding time with military dog trainers. As the name suggests, these special soldiers were people that once reared military canines or owned one. The Black Dragons were smarter than normal dogs, but at the end of the day, they were still animals. So Yao Yuan decided to let dog trainers interact with the Black Dragons.

Of course, there was another thing that was under process...

Using the enzyme in the Black Dragons' blood as template, an enzyme-clotting virus was created. It was harmless for humanity and other organisms but could cripple enzyme reaction in the Black Dragon's blood for a temporary period after it was ingested. This project was taken over by Ivan and there was expected to be breakthroughs in the next half to one year.

However, these were all long-term projects. At least, today, the sudden appearance of Black Dragons was resolved. Now Yao Yuan had to focus on how to arrange his upcoming 5-day holiday.

That night, be it the first settlers in the villa, the several ten thousand people on the Hope, and even the Defense Unit on duty had smiles on their faces. Holiday for 5 days, and even the Defense Unit soldiers could have 3 days off if they followed the assigned rotation. This was the first time mankind felt they could truly give a sigh of relief in the 6 years they had left Earth. They could enjoy this nature's paradise without fear.

Of course, there were still many things waiting for Yao Yuan to complete. These included the aforementioned rotation arrangement for the Defense Unit, the hiring of lifeguards by the beach, sending out announcements regarding the dangerous sea creatures the Academy had labeled, sending out Defense Unit soldiers to clear out the venomous sea creatures that night... The things he had to do were complicated and taxing. Even with the Hall of Communication's help, it still took Yao Yuan until 11 PM before he could leave his office.

As the Hope's captain for the past 6 years, Yao Yuan not only had to handle internal policies but also prevent internal arguments, the Hope's warps, energy, food, air, water, arrangements of the Barracks, and not to mention, the enemies that appeared after warps. Truth be told, he was tired, physically and mentally tired. No matter how strong he was, a man has his limits.

We are all made out of flesh and blood. Even though in many people's eyes Yao Yuan was a perfect superhero, he too yearned for an occasional peace and a rewarding relationship...

"Hello, is this Bo Li? You're still at the lab... even though it's already so late?" Yao Yuan lay on his bed and called Bo Li through his communicator. He could hear the sounds of machines in the background.

Bo Li's reply was laced with impatience. "What do you want? I still have some data to analyze; do not disturb me if it's not something important." Yao Yuan could hear hammering happening on the other end of his line.

Yao Yuan could picture Bo Li working in her lab. He asked directly and without hesitation, "Tomorrow's the beginning of a 5 days long holiday; didn't you say you want to see the sea? Let's go tomorrow."

"There's a holiday tomorrow?" Bo Li asked suspiciously. "Who said so? Plus, what do holidays have to do with you? Can you possibly drop your work and accompany me to the beach?"

"Err, I gave myself holiday as well. Ol' Wong will help me handle everything during my absence. As long as nothing serious happens, I'm a free bird." Yao Yuan asked gently, "So how about it? We don't get holidays often; do you want to spend 5 days by the beach?"

Bo Li was alone in her lab. Her only company was a floating, alien robot, the original prototype she kept. When she heard what Yao Yuan said, her mouth curved into a smile. But it quickly disappeared, and she replied emotionlessly, "Then... Fine, I'll go with you to the beach if you're so lonely. There're no important experiments in these few days, after all."

Yao Yuan almost laughed out loud. The girl was truly something else; it was her who wanted to go to the beach and play, but somehow it became him who needed company. Of course, Yao Yuan didn't comment on it, he responded, "Perfect, then you better leave the lab and go to sleep. If you're burning the midnight oil tonight, we're not going to the beach tomorrow."

Bo Li pouted but didn't argue. She said, "Fine, I'll be sure to sleep early tonight... Don't be late." Then she cut off the

communication.

Yao Yuan laughed on the other end of the phone. He knew this was how Bo Li showed her anger. Actually, in the past few months, Bo Li had been dropping hints about going to the beach, reminding him of his promise. However, due to his busy schedule, especially the things with the Black Dragons, Yao Yuan had to pretend he didn't hear her. He simply couldn't find time for her. Several rebuffs later, a miffed Bo Li closed herself up in her lab. Other than that, she would be aloof whenever he conversed with her.

"Still a little girl..."

Yao Yuan put down the communicator with a smile. Truth be told, he was not new to this game. He was a real Casanova. His unique profession meant that he had to sometimes rely on something other than his strength. Charm goes a long way as well. With his handsome features and manly image, it was easy for him to find his way into a woman's heart.

Of course, if it wasn't a mission, he would not use these flirting techniques. Furthermore, once the mission's accomplished, he would disappear from these women's lives.

In reverse, there were only 2 women in this life that had truly touched his heart.

Early the next morning, Yao Yuan habitually put on his military fatigue. But then he quickly caught himself and realized that it was a holiday. He laughed at his own mistake and set the military outfit

on the sofa. Then he retrieved a T-shirt and beach pants from his closet. He readied his swimming trunks and pulled on a pair of sunglasses he bought when he was on a mission in Hawaii. With the change in appearance, Yao Yuan looked like a completely different person.

"Maybe this kind of outfit will be common from now on. After mankind has settled down on the new planet, I believe there won't be any more wars in my lifetime. A future... with Bo Li?"

Yao Yuan smoothed his hair and walked out of his room. The two Black Star Close Guards who stood guard outside his door were fazed. The first reaction for one of them was to raise his Gaussian rifle at Yao Yuan, while the other, who had a better response system, yelled, "Wait, it's the Captain. Put down your weapon!"

Yao Yuan smiled at the two men. "The holiday started from today's dawn; why are you two still on duty?"

The African-American soldier who raised his gun laughed awkwardly, mumbling, "The general wanted us to stand guard outside of your door until the Captain was awake. Our holiday starts tomorrow."

Yao Yuan pushed out his hand for a handshake instead of the usual military salute. He then said, "Thank you for your service. Do go home early today and take a well-deserved rest. Remember to bring your families to the beach tomorrow, wade in the ocean, and enjoy the seafood. Maybe try a little sunbathing too. Either way, I hope you won't mind me enjoying the holiday before you do."

The soldier stuttered awkwardly, "Of, of course. Captain deserves this holiday more than we do. Yes, yes..."

Yao Yuan gave another cheerful laugh. He bid the soldiers farewell and headed towards Bo Li's room that was on the 4th floor. As he was about to knock on it, the door was pulled open by Bo Li from the other side. Her bleary eyes bulged alarmingly as she took in Yao Yuan's get-up.

Her reaction was similar to many who saw Yao Yuan that morning. The usually brave, severe and kind Captain Yao Yuan had suddenly changed into a beach hunk. More than 100 soldiers, government workers, and scientists stared curiously at Yao Yuan, and many of them walked straight into pillars and walls.

A faint blush rose to Bo Li's face, but she said expressionlessly, "What... what you doing here so early? The sun hasn't even risen yet."

Yao Yuan chuckled and parted the long hair that had fallen over Bo Li's face, adding, "Since we're going to the beach, we can't possibly miss out on the sunrise. I'm prepared to release the stress that I've accumulated over the past 6 years all at once today. So... are you excited?"

"I... am not." Bo Li swatted Yao Yuan's hand away. She left the door open and walked back into her room, saying, "It's you who forced me to go, so I'm more of a babysitter. You mentioned watching the sunrise? I would never have pegged you for a

romantic."

Yao Yuan didn't say much but planted himself on her sofa. Bo Li filed away her research notes and spent another half an hour to 'casually' ready herself. She changed into a white tank top and short pants. Accessories-wise, she only carried a small purse. It gave her a youthful and refreshing look, but it didn't take away from her intellectual feel.

"Alright, let's go see that sunrise."

Chapter 214: Planning the Future

The orange sun rose up lazily from the horizon. The horizon of the sea melted seamlessly into the sky, giving the illusion that the rising sun had emerged from the sea to dye the entire world orange.

The few thousand people on the beach were silent watching this majestic moment. It was so quiet that one would be able to hear the sound of the people breathing. After the sun completely rose above the horizon, people looked at one another and chuckled in relief, breaking up the oddly solemn atmosphere.

On the first day of the holiday, there were at least 8,000 people gathered on the beach to watch the sunrise. There were newly-weds and young couples cuddled in each other's arms watching the sunrise together.

This was a great moment for relaxation for many people. They could finally sigh in relief after 6 long years of extreme stress. There were tears among the smiles.

These were tears of happiness. The crowd didn't have time to be melancholy. After the sunrise, the amount of the people on the beach gradually increased. Several business-minded people had set up little stores by the beach, selling the freshest fruits, seafood, wild game, and vegetables from the new planet. The price was three times the normal price, but after considering that everyone was still getting paid on the holidays, it was still affordable.

Yao Yuan brought Bo Li to one of these shops after watching the sunrise. Along the way, many people saluted and bowed to him, but everyone acted within a sense of propriety. No one disturbed him on this precious holiday; they merely stood in awe and appreciation for this hero who saved them multiple times from certain death.

Yao Yuan pulled Bo Li into the waiting line. Under the waiters' confused gaze, he ordered a light breakfast for both himself and Bo Li.

The breakfast was simple but nutritious. Even though humanity had just started to populate this new planet, they realized that the natural resources on this planet were more than enough to feed several tens of thousands of people. The food resources gathered from this delta region to the sea were more than enough to feed the entire the Hope. Therefore, in terms of food, humanity had nothing to worry about.

Yao Yuan gentlemanly helped Bo Li peel open the skin of a fruit called 'Milk Fruit.' They had a custard-esque milky-colored flesh, and they had a buttery bouquet to them. The smell alone was enough to open one's appetite. This kind of fruit was found when the gathering party ventured into the northern Frozen Needles Forest. The gathered amount was small, so the price was fairly expensive, but it was still affordable by Yao Yuan's standards.

Bo Li blushed slightly. She used a spoon to scoop out a small piece of the fruit's flesh. It had a consistency of ice-cream and custard, melting immediately when it hit the mouth. It left behind a refreshing, milky taste with each bite, a real alien treat. Even a

normally indifferent girl like Bo Li finished the fruit in a few scoops. Then she stared straightly at the Milk Fruit on Yao Yuan's plate.

Yao Yuan laughed jovially, peeled open his own Milk Fruit, and put it on Bo Li's plate. The girl smiled happily and Yao Yuan said, "This Milk Fruit is incredibly unique. It is a type of nut, but it has buttery flesh. Currently, only the Frozen Needles Forest at this planet's North Pole has them. Before mass plantation, even I only have 2 to 3 of them each month."

Bo Li ignored him and focused completely on the Milk Fruit. After she finished it, she gave Yao Yuan a sudden side-eye, adding, "You're way too good at things like this. How many women have fallen for these tricks of yours? ... You know what, I didn't expect the hot-blooded captain to be such a ladies' man."

Yao Yuan didn't take offense. Instead, he laughed it off. "You're right. Even though my flirting skills are nowhere near my combat skills, I'm not ashamed to say they're not bad either. At least expert level. However, this doesn't mean that I'm a Lothario; you know about my previous history, sometimes..."

Bo Li rejoiced even though she had no idea what made her so happy. When Yao Yuan stopped in the middle of his sentence, she urged, "Sometimes... what?"

Yao Yuan came to and said, with a smile, "Oh, it's nothing. At least you should know I've been absolutely clean after we left Earth. You're the first woman I've invited after we got on the Hope."

Bo Li nodded silently, took a sip of her Purple Plum Juice, and a thought flashed across her mind... After we got on the Hope? Then what about before then? What happened before then?

But the thought quickly dislodged itself. After the quick breakfast, the sun was already high up in the sky. The external temperature was about 32 degrees, perfect for a day on the beach. The sun didn't feel prickly on the skin; it was like a blanket of warmth. This was probably because the new planet's ozone layer was undamaged, free from modern pollution, so the light on this planet wasn't as dangerous as the one on 'Earth.' One could enjoy a day in the sun with the minimum SPF protection.

Yao Yuan then brought Bo Li back to the beach. This time it was Bo Li who came prepared. She set down two towels and beach rugs for them to lie down on. In an inspired moment, Yao Yuan took out his top and went for a swim. After a quick round in the ocean, he came back feeling completely refreshed. He accidentally found out Bo Li's secret: she didn't know how to swim. When he asked Bo Li to join him, the girl rejected him with an annoyed expression. Yao Yuan pulled her into the ocean, but she only floated about in the area where her feet could still touch the sea bed.

Yao Yuan noticed that Bo Li actually yearned to learn how to swim, but like a scared kitten, she didn't dare to venture into the deeper ocean. When Yao Yuan left her side, she would stealthily wade back to shore. Finally, Yao Yuan took the courage to put his arm around her waist and the both of them swam alongside each other. 10 minutes later, both returned to shore and started sunbathing.

"Are you having fun?" Yao Yuan asked. He had on his sunglasses and had his hands behind his head. He was enjoying this rare moment of peace and quiet.

Bo Li still had a blush on her face, but it was unknown whether it was caused by the sun or the couple's swimming session. She thought about it and said, "Yes, this is very fun. I've always wanted to see the ocean, but there simply wasn't time..."

Yao Yuan was silent before asking, "After the incident on the space station, I rushed to Beijing to find you and your mother, but two of you had disappeared. What happened then?"

Bo Li's body visibly shook. Finally, she said icily, "... I was still too young then, so I can't remember anything."

Yao Yuan sighed inaudibly. Suddenly, he pushed out his hand to straighten Bo Li's hair, adding, "Alright, it's no use fixating on the past anyway. We're out today to have fun; it's my fault for bringing that up. I promise you you'll have a future full of happiness, so let's not dwell on the past."

This time Bo Li didn't swat Yao Yuan's hands away. She lowered her head and asked, "A future full of happiness... What about you? What are your plans for the future?"

Yao Yuan answered, "Naturally, after the human government is formed, I expect I'll be in power for at least the next 100 years. This is the best option for all the parties involved. 100 years is not a

short period of time. At least 4 new generations of babies will be born. That is enough to ensure humanity's future...

"I predict that in the next 50 years, humanity's population will increase to about 5,000,000 people. Of course, this might seem to be an astronomical number when we look at our current statistics, so in the next decade, after the new capital is ready and the societal structure has stabilized, I plan to use the sperm and ovum bank. With the combined numbers of both natural and clinical births, we should be able to reach 5,000,000 people. This is the early part of the plan.

"The middle part, after we've reached the population target, is time for colonization and development. Of course, I'm personally against colonizing this beautiful planet; I think we should keep it as natural as possible. So when the time comes, I will suggest we colonize the moon or other planets, building space stations or alien bases. At the same time, effort will go into constructing massive spaceships. Of course, the Academy will be given all the resources necessary to make inroads into the 4th revolution technology, and hopefully, in the next 100 years, humanity will be able to enter the peak of 4th industrial revolution."

Bo Li asked rather impatiently, "That's all? What about your personal future?"

Yao Yuan guffawed. He pushed out his hand again, but instead of tousling Bo Li's hair, he reached for her hand, saying, "For the next 100 years, or as long as I may live... would you experience it together with me? Holding each other's hands just like this."

At that moment, Bo Li's face became as red as a ripe apple...

Chapter 215: One and a Half Year and Founding Ceremony

Time flies. It has been one and a half year ever since the wars with the mother nest...

In this year and a half, the foundation of the new capital was completed. There were 4 residential areas, the Human Plaza in the middle of the capital, the planned commerce streets, administrative streets, tourism centers, and other empty spaces reserved for future plans and uses. The new capital was huge, covering a huge plot of land, not something that could be explained with a few lines of words.

Other than the capital's construction, the other major advancement was weapons development. Even though Yao Yuan believed there would not be another major war within his lifetime, or at least in 100 years, it didn't mean that the cosmos was a safe space.

After they left Earth, the people of the Hope learned a valuable lesson that there were dangers hiding everywhere in space. It might be natural, manmade, or alien-made. The whole cosmos was a veritable battlefield. Survival of the fittest, that was the iron rule of the cosmos. Even though the chance of civil war was low, having a strong enough army and weapons for the sake of defense was necessary. This was agreed upon by more than 90 percent of the population.

In the past year and a half, one-fifth of the productivity was used in war industry. Mines were set up all over the new planet, and

then the ores were smelted down by the robots to produce 4th revolution weaponry and siege engines.

Today, mankind had produced 5 Heaven's Clouds. Each of them was 300 meters tall and 200 meters wide. They could float aboveground for 200 meters, came equipped with a high-voltage supermagnetic shield, an internal polymerized reactor, and every single one of them was capable of two-fifths of the Hope's firepower. In other words, if their power was pooled, it would be like having 2 Hopes!

There was also a new on-the-ground siege engine. It looked like a mechanical spider, so it was dubbed the Spider Tank. It had 2 Gaussian rotating cannons, could carry 4 passengers, and similarly had an electromagnetic shield. Its maximum speed on land was 160 kilometers per hour and it could adapt easily to rough terrains. It was about 6 meters tall and 3.5 meters wide. The Hope currently had 360 of them, mostly for the Defense Unit's use.

In terms of air force, the Hope manufactured a simplified version of Space Combat Jet Prototype 003. It could be used within and outside of the ozone layer. Its speed was only one-fifth the speed of space combat jet, but that was already the limit for normal pilot. There were about 300 of these jets in total, and all of them were for the Defense Unit.

Lastly were the three unfinished space battleships...

Each battleship was about 1,700 meters long, 650 meters wide and 400 meters tall. They each came equipped with a polymerized reactor, a cavalcade of Gaussian heavy artilleries, and anti-

gravitational system. Other than that, they could also act as a temporary base and garage for Space Combat Jet Prototype 003s.

Humanity's technology was at the middle of 4th industrial revolution, so it was a stretch handling both weapons manufacturing, construction of the new capital, and these three battleships. The focus was on the previous two, so there was only a frame for each of the three battleships. It would need at least another 2 and a half years before they could be completed.

This concludes the technological and military update on humanity. Next are the societal updates.

The 17 Six-legged Black Dragons had completely melted into the human society. Through daily feeding and interaction, a bond had slowly but surely formed. In the past one and a half years' worth of research, the Academy found out that the Black Dragons possessed intelligence equal to a 4 or 5-year-old child. However, with daily intake of saltwater fish, their intelligence could evolve further. The analysis result showed that when the Black Dragons' scales became completely white, they would have intelligence similar to an 8 or 9-year-old human child.

That was scary enough because it meant that they could learn and understand human speech. They could identify more than a thousand words, solve simple logic puzzles, and differentiate between good and evil. After this research result was published, there was a group of people who was worried that the six-legged Black Dragons would one day develop their own civilization and pose a threat to humanity.

If they had ill intentions against humanity, with their growing intelligence and frightening physical strength, humanity would be completely wiped out...

However, accompanying that report was another that squelched this growing fear. The other report said the Hope's government already possessed something that could counter the Black Dragons' uprising. It was a virus that could shut down the enzyme within the Dragons' blood stream. The virus was harmless to human contact but was lethal to the Black Dragons. With the presence of this ultimate weapon, the worry instantly dissipated.

The Dragons' high intelligence meant that they could communicate better with humanity and provide more services to mankind.

Currently, there were 46 Black Dragons and 3 baby Black Dragons living alongside humanity. The Black Dragon couple that first gained contact with mankind already had their scales turned to a light brown color. However, the discoloration speed had visibly decreased. Maybe the intelligence growth was less conspicuous after adulthood.

In comparison, the baby dragons that had saltwater fish ever since they were born had scaly bodies that were as white as snow. From daily interaction, it was also observable that they were highly intelligent. Simultaneously, they showcased high reliance on mankind. It was only natural, because the first creature they saw when they opened their eyes were human beings, and it was also human beings who fed them every day. Therefore, if there was no accident, the baby dragons would be loyal to humanity for as

long as they may live, especially since they had such high intelligence.

The capital's defense walls were reinforced with support from the 46 adult Black Dragons. They guarded the area like how they guarded their territory, fierce and unyielding. Sometimes, they would even join the Defense Unit or Black Star Troopers on their patrol, and the only thing they asked for in return was a daily supply of saltwater fish...

On the other hand, human society was developing smoothly. In the past one and a half years, a new batch of babies was born. There were about ten thousand of them. Therefore, there were positions like teachers, babysitters, and nurses that needed to be filled. The government helped by building more hospitals and schools.

The only thing that marred this great period of wealth and satisfaction was the enlarged Confinement Order. The Confinement Order banned those without permission from going beyond the capital walls. It irked the scientists that couldn't get clearance and civilians that wanted to go hunting on the weekends.

Initially, everything was fine, but human beings are creatures that yearn for open space. With the increase in the Black Dragons' numbers and increasing knowledge of the new planet's flora and fauna, the demand for the removal of the Confinement Order was getting louder and louder. It was only second to the cries for a founding ceremony...

Yao Yuan sat at the head of the conference table. Before him were

representatives from the Academy, Workshop, Barracks, and various government organizations. There were also people of influence from the House of Representatives and the Treasury. There were only in total about 30 people, but they represented every aspect of human society.

This was because the meeting was about the important event that was happening tomorrow. An event that would be one for the history books, something the public had been waiting for. It was the founding ceremony!

"... That's basically the program for tomorrow. You can refer to the printed document for details. It will begin by the concluding speeches of various departments, then my own speech. After that, it's the marching ceremony and the fiesta celebration. This day every year will be our new country's national day. Is there anything anyone would like to add?" Yao Yuan asked the room.

Everyone had already finished reading the document that was set before them. In truth, preparations for the Founding Ceremony had started more than half a year ago. Tomorrow would be the fruition, so everything that needed to be said had been said. However, a representative suddenly said, "Captain, there is nothing more worth discussing, but there are two points that worry me. One is your designation. The title 'chancellor' is a bit..."

Yao Yuan shook his head, saying, "This is a non-issue. We're a new government on a new planet; whatever the title represented back on old Earth has no relation to what it is now."

The representative nodded his head before adding, "The second

issue is the Confinement Order. We all know that the crux of the issue is gun legislation. Captain is going to abolish the Confinement Order tomorrow, but the issue of gun ownership..."

"We allow civilian-used Gaussian pistols and Gaussian hunting rifles," Yao Yuan interrupted. "We can't violate the people's right to owning firearms. The key is not allowing military grade firearms for public use. Of course, a lot of amendments are required before it can be listed as law. It's not something we can come to a conclusion within just a short meeting."

The representative thought about it and concurred.

Yao Yuan addressed the room, "Alright, if there's nothing else, the meeting ends here. Tomorrow..."

"Will be our new government's Founding Ceremony!"

Chapter 216: Politics

The highlight of the Founding Ceremony was, of course, the marching ceremony. There were the nine impressive-looking groups of Black Star Troopers, the smart Defense Unit soldiers, Spider Tanks, Space Combat Jet Prototype 003s, and coming up at the rear, the Heaven's Clouds.

These were all very exciting. Many civilians only found out then how powerful mankind's technology had become. It was a rude wake up call for those that thought humanity's technology was still stuck in the 3rd revolution.

"We've been through a lot. When we escaped Earth, we couldn't see hope for our future because humanity was forced to leave the planet that had nurtured our civilization. The cosmos was too dangerous, so much so that we could be wiped out at any time. However, we've stuck out despite the challenges and tribulations until today, and now we're standing firm on this new planet! We've found our future!"

This was Yao Yuan giving his speech at the front of the Human Plaza. The atmosphere was solemn. Everyone listened quietly, lost in their thoughts. Maybe the newborns and children who were only less than 5 years old when they got on the Hope couldn't understand it, but all the adults shared the same belief. A lot of sacrifices had to be made for them to have what they had that day. Everything was precious.

"Let us celebrate and let us not forget! I announce..."

"The start of a new human government!"

The plaza erupted into a thunderous applause. People cheered on the top of their lungs. People who didn't know each other hugged, and some elders even started weeping tears of joy. They'd been waiting for a long time for this day to come.

After the cheering died down, Yao Yuan's voice rang across the plaza again, "Other than that, the Confinement Order is officially abolished starting from today! However, for your safety, do carry your firearms when you venture out . Of course, this requires H-coins and a firearms permit..."

Just like that, the Founding Ceremony drew to a close. The whole process was recorded by 10 cameras, to be kept as important data for the future. Of course, the day wasn't only kept in the video tape and central mainframe, it lived on within the people's hearts. No one would ever forget this momentous day. They told themselves, after they were old, that they must share this story with their grandchildren so that the memory would live on forever through the continuity of humanity...

Following the completion of the Founding Ceremony was the construction of the Yao Yuan-led new government. This time the organization was more official. It mirrored Earth's old governmental structure by introducing crucial ministries like the Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Civil Service, Ministry of Law, and the like...

In terms of a state system, Yao Yuan opted for semi centralization of power and semi-democracy. With him as the chancellor, Yao

Yuan had absolute right over politics, military, and most governmental agencies. He had the right to exact, propose, and veto any laws. In other words, the power of the new government was centered around one man, Yao Yuan himself. His power was akin to the emperors of ancient China.

This unusual centralization of power attracted much attention. Even with Yao Yuan's enormous prestige and reputation, more than 100 people came to him with opinions and persuasions. Most surprisingly, Guang Zhen was part of this party. According to Guang Zhen, since Yao Yuan didn't have such an audacious ambition, there was no reason for him to hold on to such a huge chunk of power. In his opinion, Yao Yuan only needed absolute military power. He needed to practice more delegation of power.

Power delegation was the natural course of things. After all, it was already the 21st century. The 4th industrial revolution had restructured the whole system of society. Autocracy was no longer possible unless it was demanded by extreme situations like when the Hope was travelling through space or when humanity was faced with the threat of extinction. If Yao Yuan wanted to adopt autocracy at this time of peace, it was not unlikely that he would be overthrown. After all, even within the Defense Unit and Black Star Troopers, only his comrades in the Black Star Unit were supportive of Yao Yuan's centralization of power. Their worry was not unfounded. While Yao Yuan was a kind ruler, who could guarantee his successor would be the same? By then, only anarchy could overthrow the ruler for its citizens to regain freedom.

Regarding this point, Yao Yuan had thought long and hard about it. However, autocracy and power delegation were two different things. People would appreciate if things went from severity to

leniency instead of the other way round. This was the truth that Yao Yuan believed in.

After the general frame of the new government had settled in, Yao Yuan enlarged the House of Representatives' power spectrum. Other than military details, they had advisory and consultative right over most things. In other words, Yao Yuan abolished the senate, allowing the House of Representatives to take over the senate's function. This way, Yao Yuan also cut off the possibility of people using their money or influence to buy the post of a politician.

Simultaneously, the citizens' power also increased. Naturally, other than the law pertaining to the military, every citizen had a vote to veto the proposed legislation even if it was one that had been passed by the House of Representatives. If the legislation was rejected three times, then the person who proposed the legislation would be removed from the House.

The power of the judiciary was separated. The Supreme Court was an isolated presence from the government and House of Representatives. The chancellor didn't have the right to elect the Supreme Court judge for life; this right went to the citizens via public voting...

Other than that, the honorary medals of hero, guardian, warrior, and defender could be awarded to living members of the society depending on the situation. Whenever one was awarded one of these medals, he or she would enter the House of Representatives as an honorary representative. This role would be for life and he or she wouldn't have to join the election that happened every 4 years.

The new government currently was still a melting pot. Basically, it absorbed all the benefits from old Earth's different governing styles. Simultaneously, the constitution for the new government was still in the works. It was a giant underworking, currently involving 1,400 individuals. The outline was expected to be finished in the next 5 years. Editing would be allowed after that.

After Yao Yuan announced these changes, the worried citizens and army sighed in relief. Even though Yao Yuan still held a great amount of power, it was balanced out by the increased power of the House of Representatives. Furthermore, since mankind's population was still low, pretty much every family had a member who was enrolled in the Defense Unit. Therefore, the citizens weren't that afraid of a military takeover. However, no one could tell what the future would bring. After all, absolute power corrupts absolutely. The people had seen many such examples.

A month after the Founding Ceremony, the House of Representatives, who had its power enlarged, started demonstrating its newfound power...

"Mr. Speaker! I am adamantly against the Logging Order! We cannot repeat the devastation of nature on this new planet, we need to protect its natural ecosystem!"

This was a hearing on the Logging Order. A few reporters showcased a series of pictures, and the pictures were about the devastating effect the Logging Order had on the planet's environment.

Every single picture was taken from a bird's eye view. The few reporters, or more accurately, photographers, framed the ruined jungle-scape perfectly. Viewed from the above, the blackened patch of forest looked like an unsightly, bald patch. The originally lush prehistoric jungle was rendered barren by fire. The images were particularly dreadful for the people who had experienced the effects of pollution firsthand when they were on Earth.

So far, Speaker Matt hadn't said anything during the hearing. He stared silently at the few people who kept on giving inflammatory statements. Of course, he knew who these people were. They were responsible for the cries of dissatisfaction that arose when the Hope was still in the air, saying that the government wanted to lock them up. Politics... was a world in the shades of gray. There was no absolute right or wrong, and there was always a bigger motive behind everything.

Matt was a senior in the world of politics. In the entire House of Representatives, he was one of the rare few politician-by-trades from Earth. He chuckled inwardly, realizing that these few people wanted to have a game of politics with him. They were still too young to challenge him. With this one hearing, he understood what they were going for...

These people wanted to try out the range of the power in their hands. They wanted to test for Yao Yuan's reaction using a harmless legislation. The Logging Order was part of environmental protection law; it had nothing to do with civil law, administration, or military. They wanted to try for Yao Yuan's reaction from this angle. The worst that could happen was having the bill denied. However, if Yao Yuan could compromise, then they would surround him like sharks that smelled blood. It would allow them

the opening to demand for more and more. Of course, the demands wouldn't be out of line, but what they wanted was a precedent, a beginning.

Furthermore, the Logging Order still had something to do with the military. Even though the House of Representatives had its power enlarged, there was still a segment they couldn't touch: the military. However, if they could do something about the Logging Order, this meant that it was entirely possible to send their feelers into the military and from there, undermine Yao Yuan's absolute hold over the military...

These people's intention was clear as day to Matt. But he didn't want to get himself involved in this mess. These dummies had no clue where Yao Yuan's power came from. Did they seriously think all that power was simply because he was the captain or the military's top general? No, it was the support of the common people. Tens of thousands of people, Matt included, respected Yao Yuan as a person. He was like a great person listed in the history books, his position unshakable. There was no way the power of the government was going to change while he was still alive!

However...

Maybe the action of these few dummies would be the perfect chance to test whether Yao Yuan would follow the rules. The worst thing one could do in politics was reckless rule-breaking. In a way, they were lucky the rules were created by Yao Yuan himself, because it meant that it would be unlikely for him to break his own rules. Then again... it wouldn't hurt to know for sure. This would be that perfect chance to find out.

"...The House of Representatives agreed via majority voting that the Logging Order couldn't be revoked due to its relation to the alien mother nest, but the methods could be changed. For example, a quarantine area could be set up around the affected area for more in-depth investigation to ascertain the situation of the alien cell remains..."

The bill didn't completely reject the Logging Order but introduced possible changes to it. After the bill was passed, it was arrived at Yao Yuan's table that afternoon.

Chapter 217: The Past

The Logging Order was eventually changed even though the change didn't exactly follow the House of Representatives' suggestion. Every spot that was suspected to harbor remains of the mother nest would be checked at least three times before burning. Simultaneously, after burning, the spot would be set up as quarantine.

After several days of anxious waiting, the House of Representatives sighed greatly in relief because after all, the Logging Order did change. However, this was as far as things went. Those in the game of politics were highly patient people, and doing things in moderation was the sign of a good political player. Vigorous pursuit was not politics; that's public pressure.

Yao Yuan too felt relieved in the days following that. After the optimization of the human government, he was only needed to guide the people down a key direction; the miscellaneous duties were passed on to government workers. This way, even though human society in general had gotten busier, he, on the other hand, had received more spare time. He only worked for five to six hours every day.

Yao Yuan finally had his own private time.

He used this precious time to go on walks or picnics with Bo Li, go fishing with Guang Zhen and gang, or he might get off work already to enjoy a relaxing afternoon accompanied by tea and a good book. His bookshelf was filled with historical dramas, war stories, and crime stories.

It was worth mentioning that about half a year ago, Yao Yuan had already semi-moved in with Bo Li. This meant that the couple would move in together on the days of the month when they were most free. Normally, they would carry on with their busy schedules. Therefore, it could only be called semi-move in.

Today, Bo Li left her lab early to visit the biology lab. When she arrived, Ivan was ordering a few interns to set up some experiment equipment. When he saw Bo Li, he waved a nearby researcher over and had him take over guiding the interns while Ivan went to Bo Li.

"Professor Bo Li, please follow me to my personal office; there are too many people out here." Ivan smiled before leading Bo Li to a room deeper in the biology lab.

Bo Li followed Ivan wordlessly into his office. After both of them were seated on the sofa, Ivan said, "Professor Bo Li, I've tested the two blood samples you've given me. Genetically, they are fine; there shouldn't be an issue of infertility. Based on the results, this male and female are in the pink of their health. Of course, if you want a more in-depth report, it's best that you present to me the sperm and ovum samples."

Bo Li frowned slightly, adding, "No, that's more than enough. Thank you, Professor Ivan." In between words, she had stood up and extended her hand.

Ivan took her hand and shook it, saying, "I'm glad to be able to be

of help. Do come get me if you need anything in the future. By the way, you and the Captain are getting married by the end of this year, right? It's early, but congratulations. I'll be sure to attend the ceremony."

Bo Li forced a smile before leaving the biology lab. After the door closed behind her, she felt her heart shatter. It was a hard-to-describe feeling, like she had been lied to...

Yes, Bo Li had done the deed with Yao Yuan half a year ago. They were especially inseparable in the beginning few days. And then there were the visits that continued to happen every month. Bo Li purposely counted to have their "encounters" on her non-safe days, but half a year later, she was still not pregnant. Finally, she had no choice but to go to Yao Yuan for an answer. His reply was that he was naturally infertile.

Bo Li swiped Yao Yuan's blood sample without him knowing and asked Ivan to have it tested. She passed him hers to have it tested as well. This was the result she received...

Bo Li stood in front of the lab for quite some time until she finally came to a decision. She waved down an electromobile and rode it to the Barracks' headquarters, the Pentagon.

The Pentagon was a hidden location for normal citizens. They were not allowed entry. Bo Li, though, had a high security clearance. A Homo Evolutis, the mind behind Space Combat Jet Prototype 003 and much Gaussian weaponry, and her relationship with Yao Yuan was already half open, so when she arrived, the guards didn't stop her. She strode directly to Guang Zhen's office.

When Bo Li pushed open Guang Zhen's office's door, he was in the middle of a conversation with a middle-aged soldier. Surprise was apparent on Guang Zhen's face when Bo Li walked in. He quickly finished his conversation with the soldier, escorted him out, and had Bo Li sit on the sofa.

Before Guang Zhen could say anything, Bo Li jumped the gun, "Uncle Wong... Help me."

Guang Zhen was taken back before smiling. "You're finally willing to admit your real identity? Don't worry, we won't treat you differently because of your family background. Chou's deeds have nothing to do with you. Plus, when we get to the bottom of it, he was our comrade." Guang Zhen sighed before continuing, "No one could have known he would end up that way; it's no one's fault. The last time you called me Uncle Wong was when you were six... time flies. Anyway, how can I help you? Bo Li, I will help if it's within my capability, so don't hesitate to tell me."

Bo Li got teary-eyed all of a sudden. She lowered her head to collect herself. When she lifted it again, she was already her usual aloof self. "Uncle Wong, I want to know about Yao Yuan's past. He lied to me that he's infertile even though the test results came back otherwise. Has he taken the vasectomy surgery? Or... am I just a fling for him?"

This was another shock for Guang Zhen. He opened his mouth to say something but quickly caught himself. Some time later, he sighed and said, "Bo Li, you're putting me in a very rough spot. If Yao Yuan knew it was me who revealed his past, then he would

have me skinned..."

"He won't," Bo Li replied seriously. "He is not an unreasonable person. He is in the wrong for lying to me. I deserve the truth; why did he lie to me? At least until I'm privy to the whole truth, I'm not certain I can even forgive him. I can't ask him, because I don't want to see him right now."

Guang Zhen gave a long sigh before coming to a conclusion. "I guess I won't be able to look him in the face after this... Alright, Bo Li, since you are willing to call me Uncle Wong again, I'll tell you everything I know about his past, but I can't help with the details beyond that."

"That time, he was still the Black Star Unit's captain and I was the vice-captain..."

Yao Yuan was born into a family of aristocrats. Logically, he should enter the world of politics when he became older. However, because of multiple political missteps, the power of his family slowly dwindled. Since this was not the 20th century, you couldn't have a whole family exiled or killed. Their power may have dwindled, but resurgence in power was entirely possible.

Under that circumstance, the best future for Yao Yuan was no longer politics but military.

His natural talent in combat, incredible power of observation, and the inborn leadership from his aristocratic background were slowly honed in the military. Eventually, he was conscripted into

the Black Star Unit. After the old captain retired due to combat injuries, he was the best pick to lead the Black Star Unit.

Yao Yuan showcased incredible performance. The Black Star Unit rose out of anonymity in the next two to three years to the stage where it could stand toe to toe with the other Dragon special unit. Slowly but surely, the missions that fell into Black Star Unit's hands got increasingly more difficult and closer to the center of the power structure.

And during one of our escort missions, he met the granddaughter of a minister that was then at the top of the political hierarchy.

Guang Zhen elaborated as he went down memory lane, "With Yao Yuan's good looks and impressive physique from army training, he could get any woman he wanted. Before he met the granddaughter, he had charmed his way through many missions. If he put his heart into it, almost any woman, no matter their age, would fall for him..."

Of course, after that, Yao Yuan coupled up with the granddaughter. Guang Zhen didn't go into their romantic details and Bo Li didn't ask; both of them skirted around the sensitive topic expertly. When Guang Zhen continued, the time had skipped to when the girl became pregnant with his child. When this thing was revealed to the world, Yao Yuan was mistaken by the minister and his family that he impregnated the girl because he intended to use her as a tool to regain his family's standing.

Yao Yuan's situation was actually very dangerous, as he could be assassinated at any time. Many of his close friends advised him to

make himself scarce. With his ability, he could easily hide himself to a stage where even the leader of the Dragon special units wouldn't be able to locate him. However, he chose to stay to nurture this impossible relationship. The girl was under house lockdown at that point. She was ordered to go through an abortion. Many things happened after that, Guang Zhen explained those in broad strokes. It was obvious that he was still cautious about certain things. He was reluctant to reveal the nitty-gritty of things.

Bo Li kept the same emotionless appearance. Since Guang Zhen refused to go into the detail, she didn't want to press. She merely asked, "Then what happened? Did they... end up together?"

"Of course not," Guang Zhen said bitterly. "Or he wouldn't be so lonely now. The granddaughter... died when she was in her second trimester..."

Chapter 218: Not Her Replacement

Yao Yuan was in a fine mood today because the six-legged Black Dragons had given birth to another baby dragon. Maybe it had something to do with the change in their diet, but the total number of baby dragons now had reached three. Combined with the one Yao Yuan found, humanity now had four baby dragons. They would be great assets to mankind in the future.

As long as the baby dragon was raised by human, then they would have a natural intimacy towards human beings. This intimacy would follow them for life. Even though it might decrease their feral nature and thus lower their combat power, the six-legged Black Dragons didn't completely depend on their feral nature to be such an imposing presence on the battlefield. They had their naturally impressive physical prowess for that. Therefore, not being raised in the wild was not an issue. If this was how things went, in the next 100 years, or at least while Yao Yuan was still alive, complete taming of the Black Dragon was entirely possible.

Buoyed by this good mood, Yao Yuan specially went to purchase one kilogram of Milk Fruit. It cost him five days' worth of salary. This was one of the few favorite foods Bo Li liked. When he thought about how Bo Li's face would light up when she saw the Milk Fruit, the splurge was be worth it.

When Yao Yuan arrived home, Bo Li was making dinner, a simple, home-cooked meal with some of Yao Yuan's favorite foods. When he saw this, his heart warmed. He was comforted by a sense of belonging. No matter how difficult it was outside, it would be safe and welcoming when one was home. This was something he

would use his life to protect.

However, his heart skipped a violent beat when he saw Bo Li's face. After all, the two of them had been officially together for half a year. If calculated from the beginning, the period of time they spent in each other's close company was about one and a half years. They were familiar with each other to the point where one could tell the other's mood from their expressions and demeanor.

At that moment, Yao Yuan saw anger, disappointment, and determination on Bo Li's face. He had a bad feeling when he remembered their most recent conversation.

"Err..." Yao Yuan sat himself at the table, picked up a big bowl of rice, hesitated, finally forced a smile, and said, "What's wrong? You don't look so happy; is something from the lab bothering you? Or you're not feeling well? By the way, I bought your favorite Milk Fruit..."

Bo Li interrupted him, "Let's have dinner first. We need to have a serious talk after it."

The usually assertive Yao Yuan was cowed by guilt. He nodded anxiously and started eating. As he shoveled the food into his mouth, he kept trying to figure out why Bo Li was angry, what she would want to discuss, and how to handle that prickly discussion... like the issue of pregnancy that she recently brought up.

After Bo Li cleaned the table, she told Yao Yuan directly, "I want to get pregnant and have children together with you. Can you

promise me that?"

Yao Yuan had prepared many different scripts in his mind, but at that moment, he stumbled. After an uncomfortable silence, he uttered, "But I can't have..."

"Yes, you can." Bo Li interrupted him again, saying calmly, "Yes, you can. Will you please stop lying to me? It'll only lower you in my eyes. I only need a promise today, or tell me truthfully why you did this to me. Don't feed me any more lies."

Yao Yuan's heart skipped another beat. He was certain Bo Li had found out about some things, but that was no longer important. Who told her, what she knew, all these were frivolous details. At the end of the day, he was in the wrong, so he couldn't blame it on others. Therefore, after some consideration, he came clean. "It's not my intention to deceive you, but can you give me more time about on the issue of children? I believe both of us need a bit more time to prepare ourselves..."

Bo Li launched into her question immediately, "Then how long? Five years? Or ten years? Or one hundred years? It took you that long to fulfill the promise you made to bring me to the beach; what about this one?"

"..."

Yao Yuan was speechless. He sat there quietly even though he had many things he wanted to say. Finally, he sighed tiredly, "Can you please give me a little more time? For me to forget the pain

and start anew..."

Bo Li suddenly walked to Yao Yuan's side and pulled him in for a hug. She leaned her head on her heart, saying, "I don't want you to forget your past. If we erase everything that has happened to us, then what are we? I'm not forcing you to forget it ever happened, because that made you who you are today... and I'm deeply in love with the Yao Yuan I see before me. I don't implore you to suppress your past for my sake. Instead, I wish for you to draw strength from it to accept a different future, to accept me and our child..."

"...Our child..."

Suddenly, these few familiar words rang in Yao Yuan's mind. His expression changed immediately. Shaking his head wildly, he said, "Hong, you can't possibly give birth to this child. Hong, listen to me..."

"Hong?"

Bo Li repeated the unfamiliar name. She pulled herself away from Yao Yuan. She stared at the man before her and despair crashed over her like a tsunami. Her heart was being pulled apart. Even when she received news about her father's death, she didn't feel this way. That was because her father was at a terminal stage of cancer, so even if he didn't die by Yao Yuan's hands, he would eventually die from the disease several months later.

A simple word shook Bo Li's normally indifferent heart. She felt her heart shattering into fragile pieces. Her eyes were red, but no

tears seemed to come.

"I don't know what to say anymore, Yao Yuan. The memories of the things that we've been through flooded my mind; the time we met, the arguments we had on the Hope, the time you jokingly awarded me 250 H-coins, our altercation on the battlefield, and most recently, the wonderful day we spent on the beach. I really love you, and I want to spend our lives together, hopefully with a family of our own, but... but..."

"Yao Yuan, I'm not her replacement..."

After saying those words, Bo Li turned and left. The moment she turned her head away from him, her tears fell like chain of pearls, breaking into pieces when they hit the ground...

Yao Yuan raised his hand weakly as if trying to grab at something, but all he got was air. He couldn't even say a word. He slumped back down on his chair. After Bo Li had left the room, he mumbled softly, "No, you're not her replacement. You're really not..."

Alas, it was already too late...

That night, Yao Yuan carried a few bottles of spirit to the beach alone. It was the spot where he once saw the sunrise with Bo Li. By now, the stretch of beach had added many public amenities, like a freshwater showers, changing areas, parasols, and beach lounge renting places. As people settled into a comfortable rhythm, conveniences like these tended to spring up.

While Yao Yuan was drinking himself into a stupor, about ten Defense Unit soldiers and two Black Star Troopers were patrolling the area. It was not that Yao Yuan requested for their presence, but the rule of the new capital stated that no one was allowed outside of the city after night fell. Today was the first time Yao Yuan had used his Chancellor's special privilege, the first time he violated his own rules. Therefore, the night patrols assigned a few soldiers to escort Yao Yuan, to ensure his safety.

After half an hour, a group of people approached from a distance away. After the patrols realized it was Guang Zhen leading a small troop of Defense Unit soldiers, they let their guards down. Guang Zhen saluted the patrols and left them to their devices. He sat down beside Yao Yuan, grabbed one of the bottles, and took a small gulp.

"Hmm, this is [Lao Bai Gan](#). Rich bouquet and goes down smoothly; this must be a recent brew," Guang Zhen commented after he wiped his mouth.

Yao Yuan didn't reply. He took up his own bottle and clinked it against Guang Zhen's before tossing it back.

Guang Zhen sipped on the liquor to steel his determination. "Ol' Yao, it's me who told Bo Li... about your past. I'm sorry, I really didn't know it would end up like this, I really..."

Yao Yuan shook his head. "This is not your fault, Ol' Wong. I deceived her first. I planned to tell her a few years in why I

couldn't have a child with her, but I underestimated her autonomy... In any case, I guess this is the end for us. It might be better this way."

Guang Zhen took another heavy gulp of the spirit. He eyed the soldiers, and after making sure they were out of earshot, he whispered, "But don't worry, I didn't reveal your biggest secret... About how you're a genetic clone..."

Yao Yuan nodded. "Like I said, it worked out better for the both of us. She deserves better than what I can give her. I don't want to deprive her of the joy of motherhood..."

Guang Zhen laughed bitterly because he had no idea what else he could say. After another sip of the liquor, he added, "Right, after Bo Li came to me today, I ran a check on her recent activities and realized that she passed your blood sample over to Ivan for testing. Don't worry, because I have asked someone to deal with the sample over at Ivan's... But Ol' Yao, technology is constantly advancing, so don't worry too much. Maybe when we reach the height of 4th revolution, our genetic technology will be powerful enough to fix the natural flaw of your cloned body, so..."

Before Yao Yuan could reply, about ten soldiers rushed over. Yao Yuan and Guang Zhen recognized the one leading as one of the leaders for the Space Surveillance Department. He was a second-lieutenant, so part of the Barracks. Seeing his anxious arrival, Yao Yuan and Guang Zhen looked at one another and stood up in a hurry.

"Captain! We found, we found..."

The second-lieutenant started yelling even before he got near.

Yao Yuan ran to meet him and told him to stop talking. He had Guang Zhen move the surrounding soldiers away before he asked the second-lieutenant, "Why? What happened? Don't worry, tell me softly. Remember the confidentiality clause."

The blanched second-lieutenant said, in a barely audible whisper, "A neutron star fragment suddenly appeared outside of the solar system and..."

"According to the calculations by the central mainframe, it will collide with the sun in the next three years!"

Laobaigan is one proverbial brand of Chinese liquor.

Chapter 219: Despair

Neutron star fragment...

This was a term that was both familiar and strange to humanity. It was because of this thing that mankind had to leave Earth, their home planet. They were forced to venture into space with 3rd revolution technology. This thing had about 99 percent fatality rate!

In the Academy, there were many committees studying the appearance of neutron star fragment, but the analyses was going nowhere. After all, mankind hadn't even seen a neutron star before. All the analysis was purely theoretical.

The supposed neutron star is a stellar object that is denser than the sun. After its internal gaseous atoms, like hydrogen, fuse upon themselves to form heavy metals like carbon, the extremely high mass of the metallic atoms collapses upon itself due to its strong intra-gravitational pull. The atoms undergo a nuclear reaction to become compound nuclei. The mass of each nucleus can be calculated in terms of million tons. The star implodes upon itself but hasn't reached an inflated state where it becomes a black hole. At this stage, the star is called a neutron star.

A neutron star is a substance with a ridiculously high density. Other than the black hole, the substance with the biggest density per unit volume is the neutron star. Its tensile strength is incredible. Comparing it to diamond is like comparing gold and air; they're not even at the same level.

This was why it was hard to believe a neutron star fragment was even a possibility.

Even if the Academy had diagnosed it from many angles like gravitational pull and density, and confirmed that it was indeed a neutron star fragment, Yao Yuan still found it hard to believe!

The possibility of a technology powerful enough to break neutron star aside, on the basis of scientific theory alone, a neutron star fragment shouldn't even exist. When atoms are compressed to become compound nuclei, there exists no space between them. Therefore, the moment a neutron star fragment is extracted from the bigger neutron star, it will expand immediately. This is because there is not only pulling force between the atoms, but also repelling force, and at that moment, when the bigger structure of the neutron star lattice is disturbed, the repelling force overwrites the pulling force.

A perfect analogy would be magnets. The closer they are, the greater the repelling force between them. There needs to be a stronger external force to have them close together. The moment the fragment leaves the whole neutron star, it loses the neutron's star incredible gravitational mass to hold it together.

In other words, the presence of a neutron star fragment directly challenged basic human scientific knowledge. The first was how did one cut out a neutron star fragment? With nuclear bombing, lasers? Impossible!

The second was how did the neutron star fragment maintain its high mass density and not have its compressed atoms revert back

to its more natural state? Glue? Alien glue??

These were the conundrums facing the Academy regarding this sudden neutron star fragment appearance. With mankind's current 4th revolution technology, the answer was not to be found!

Humanity had no way of stopping the neutron star fragment from hurtling towards the sun!

When the second-lieutenant finished his report, both Yao Yuan and Guang Zhen's faces turned pale like they had seen a ghost under the living daylight. They felt swamped by despair.

Guang Zhen suddenly roared, "F*ck! How is this possible? Did that thing follow us or what? F*ck!"

Yao Yuan immediately pushed on Guang Zhen's shoulder, saying, "Ol' Wong, calm yourself! The soldiers over there still have no idea what's happening. We can't let this news leak out. We're not ready... they're also not ready."

Guang Zhen suppressed his mounting anger and frustration, slumped to the sandy floor, and started glugging down the Lao Bai Gan like it was plain water.

Yao Yuan felt the same way, but he was more rational than Guang Zhen. He asked for the second-lieutenant to sit down and asked, "Tell me in detail the entire process. How many people

know about this? You can talk softly instead of whispering; they are quite a distance away." Yao Yuan didn't forget to pass the second-lieutenant a bottle of Lao Bai Gan.

After downing a healthy sip of the hard liquor, color finally returned to the second-lieutenant's face. Then he slowly said, "About half an hour ago, the super-distance electromagnetic radar sounded the alarm. Only five people were stationed at the surveillance center because it was already after working hours. It was almost time for the change of shift. We were shocked beyond belief when it happened. We thought it was a kink in the system, you know how things are..."

Yao Yuan nodded. "Yes, it's caused by the twin stars. The electromagnetic field around the planet occasionally acts up because the two stars are so close to each other..."

The second-lieutenant nodded to show his agreement before continuing, "After we checked the system, we realized it showed... it showed a lot of suspicious data. All of it pointed towards the fact that a high mass density space entity had appeared outside of our solar system and was flying towards us with a slow speed.

"By then, there was already a bad feeling sitting in our guts. After some calculations, we've confirmed the mass density of the entity is about one-thousandth of the sun's mass density. And its speed was slowly increasing even though the acceleration wasn't fast. However, based on the central mainframe's calculations, when it collides with the sun in about three years, its mass density will have increase to about one-tenth of the sun. This... this is the same set of data we had when we were back on Earth!"

Yao Yuan was silently ruminating over the plausibility of the reality revealed to him. Before they left Earth, he did order the Black Star Unit to scrounge up the research data on the neutron star from every country's research lab. The data was later stored in the central mainframe, viewable by those past entry level ranking for both Academy and Barracks. Therefore, the second-lieutenant before him should be familiar with the data. In other words... if the machines and data had nothing wrong, then what he said was mostly true.

"This news..." As Yao Yuan said those words, his mouth was filled with bitterness. He grabbed the bottled liquor and downed it. The Lao Bai Gan chilled his mouth but burned on its way down like a wildfire tearing through his body. Strangely enough, it mirrored his feelings then. He had just been dumped and now this thing had to make its appearance. He was so close to murdering someone.

"Keep this news to yourself. Follow the confidentiality clause because this information is for S-level information..." Yao Yuan finished.

The second-lieutenant was shocked. S-level information was akin to the secrecy surrounding information like the Hope's atomic bomb code and storage location. Exposing such information would lead to execution without due process. The second-lieutenant nodded in quick succession to show that he understood the severity of the situation.

Yao Yuan took a deep breath and said, "We still need further confirmation regarding this development. We can't leave

everything to machines and devices. This time... this time we must have definite evidence. Alright, from now on, your team will be on 24-hour alert. Alongside the surveillance center's other two teams, you'll set up a surveillance rotation to keep an eye on the neutron star fragment. Any and all updates must be sent my way, any and all updates. Do you understand, Second-Lieutenant?"

The second-lieutenant quickly straightened himself, saluted, and said, "Yes, Sir!" He didn't say anything more to Yao Yuan. He turned to head towards the surveillance center that was in the middle of the new capital.

Then Yao Yuan turned towards Guang Zhen. "Ol' Wong, we must keep the lid on this sensitive information. I will have the related astronomers and scientists start researching the data. Also, there is something bugging me about this sudden development. We can't leave this new planet because of numerical data, I need more physical evidence!"

Guang Zhen looked at him in confusion. "What evidence do you need? A giant mass density is not enough?"

Yao Yuan shook his head vehemently. "Of course not! This is merely data collected through surveillance devices. Actually, after we left Earth, I have been entertaining this thought: what is the purpose of the alien civilization sending the neutron star fragment? If they wanted to wipe us out, they could have aimed the fragment at Earth itself. Isn't that more convenient? Why must they go through the trouble of having the fragment appear beyond the solar system and then have it slowly plummet towards the sun?

"Furthermore, we can't know for sure whether this is a neutron star. Based on our current scientific knowledge, a neutron star is an impossible entity! Therefore... is it not possible that this is just a ploy made up by an alien civilization that wants to take over our home planet but doesn't want to or isn't capable of fighting a war with us?

"That's why..."

Determination shone in Yao Yuan's eyes as he said, "I must see this neutron star fragment for myself!"

Chapter 220: The Observer (1)

News about the neutron star fragment had been classified as S-level security information.

When Yao Yuan and Guang Zhen received the news regarding the fragment, many things became frivolous. For example, it completely overwhelmed Yao Yuan's relationship problems. The two of them returned to the capital without a word. Then they rounded up a large number of government higher-ups as well as Barracks and Academy authorities.

The gathered people were confused. It was already so late, so why were they being gathered? They had not heard about any big events coming up, so what was the purpose of the emergency meeting?

The meeting was held at a conference room deep in the Pentagon. Initially, people were still joking and socializing with each other happily, but as the number of influential people arrived, the atmosphere became increasingly solemn. It had to be something big when high authorities from both the Academy and the Barracks were called.

When the leader of the astrophysicists, Alan, appeared in the room, everyone felt fear clench their hearts. Their sixth senses told them that this was a bad omen. Everyone prayed vehemently that their intuition was wrong...

Alan was beside himself with worry as well. He was the leader of

the various astrophysics-related groups and was the top expert in astrophysics among the human society. When he arrived and saw his many colleagues, not only from the astrophysics group but also biology and chemistry, he knew sh*t had hit the fan.

However, he kept his opinions to himself, chose a seat at the reserved VIP area, and waited patiently. Not long after that, Yao Yuan and Guang Zhen walked into the room. After a quick word between themselves, Yao Yuan walked to the stage and announced without hesitation, "Ladies and gentlemen, you're here today because our Space Surveillance Department stumbled across some strange data about an hour ago. The recorded data is now making its way to you."

As Yao Yuan spoke, a few soldiers were passing sets of documents across the room. Members from the Barracks and the government departments were unfazed because the scientific data befuddled them. However, the members of the Academy started giving gasps of shock. They stared at the document disbelievingly and started discussing with the colleagues next to them. Their faces became increasingly blanched, and a few of them started mumbling 'it's impossible,' obviously traumatized by what they saw.

"Some of the present people might not be able to understand what this document means."

Yao Yuan said on the stage, "To put it simply, a neutron star fragment about one-thousandth of our sun's mass density is hurtling towards this solar system at an accelerating speed. Its target has been confirmed to be the sun. According to calculation by the central mainframe, it will reach its target in the next three

years. Through the law of conversion, when it hits the sun, its mass will become one-tenth of the sun. In other words... three years from now will be the end of this solar system!"

Just as he finished saying that, the room erupted into chaos. People either whispered each other with questions or yelled out their enquiries loudly. Some talked to themselves, trying to convince themselves that it wasn't true, and some of the more elder people fainted on the spot.

Yao Yuan had expected as much. He waved his hands in the air and a few medics standing by the entrance rushed in to carry the fainted individuals away. After that, Yao Yuan yelled, "Silence! Those who continue to create chaos will be escorted out!"

Instantly, the room quieted. However, the faces still spoke of shock and disbelief. They refused to buy what Yao Yuan had said; they refused to admit this... reality.

"In the following days, I will erect a 'natural disaster' team to handle everything that has to deal with the neutron star catastrophe. I want to remind everyone that everything surrounding the fragment and consequently this team will be an S-level confidentiality clause. Therefore, until we understand completely what this neutron star fragment is, not a word about it outside of this room!"

Yao Yuan paused as the few fainted people rushed in from the entrance. He nodded and continued, "Everyone here will be part of the 'natural disaster' team. The Barracks will be responsible for anything security and enforcing the confidentiality clause..."

"The government officials will help keep society running smoothly. Slow down the all construction sites and focus instead on harvesting metallic ores and crops as well as the planet's natural bounty. If the danger is real and we can't do anything about it, I want us to leave with as many resources as we possibly can, so let's not waste time constructing buildings that we might not have the chance to use!

"Members of the Academy, I want you to confirm the validity of this data in the next three days. Simultaneously, I want you to calculate this fragment's speed, its current coordinates, and how close we can get to it without harming ourselves with our 4th revolution technology. I repeat, three days."

Yao Yuan sighed deeply after he finished all that. He added, with a serious expression, "Ladies and gentlemen, this planet is supposed to be our new home planet, a home that we've been building for two long years, a reward we deserved after the long war with the mother nest alien, something traded with the lives of a couple hundred heroes! Therefore, unless it is truly necessary, we will not be abandoning it...

"Let us try out best for this new planet, for our home!"

In the next three days, the 'natural disaster' team went about their respective responsibilities. First, the Barracks slowly pulled back the human range of activities. The patrol had reached deeper into the jungle but was pulled back to the city walls. Other than the few mines, smitheries, and the three spaceships' building platforms, other points of interest, like weather observatories and

wildlife observation posts, were gradually closed. With the excuse of the capital needing their help, the people stationed at these places were sent back to the capital.

The societal arrangement also received visible changes. First, the construction on the outer second, third, and fourth sites were halted, quoting the fear of environmental damage and lack of human resources or materials. The workers were moved to mining, smithing, or spaceship construction duties. The rest were tasked with harvesting the plantations around the delta or rearing the pigs, cows, and sheep brought from Earth as well as four-legged fish and fat lizards native to the new planet.

Of course, the changes couldn't be too drastic for fear of alarming the public. It was meted out over the course of three months. On the fourth month, all construction sites had stopped working and the focus had been transferred to resource collecting and management.

The scientists and academicians of the team had the most difficult job of all. They had to finish analyzing and calculating the data in three days. There were simulations to draft and theories to discuss. Essentially, they were tasked to find out a way to save this planet.

Two hundred plus scientists and a great number of interns were visibly tired after three whole days of non-stop work. They reached two conclusions.

First, the data was valid. Almost one hundred thousand calculations had been over the three days, and each of the

calculations confirmed the data's validity. The only variations were the neutron star fragment's increasing speed and its distance to the sun. The verdict was final: a neutron star fragment was indeed hurtling towards their solar system's sun.

The other conclusion, though, was a hypothesis that gladdened Yao Yuan for quite a bit.

First, the scientists still couldn't understand the theory behind the formation of the neutron star fragment. How to split a piece off of the bigger whole without harming either was a conundrum beyond mankind's current scientific comprehension, but they at least came to a consensus on one thing: there must be a mechanical contraption or a force controlling the fragment's acceleration.

Thus far, information regarding the fragment was pulled from long-distance surveillance and theoretical calculations. In other words, no one had seen an actual neutron star with their own eyes. No one knew what the actual property of a neutron element was; not even the aliens from the junkyard knew that.

Therefore, no one knew under what circumstances the neutron star fragment operated. What kind of force was supporting its acceleration, increasing its speed? Was it a machine or was it something else? Could it be destroyed?

If it couldn't be destroyed, could the force be misdirected or slowed? After all, the fragment was still pretty far away from their solar system...

Therefore, the scientists proposed a plan to save the new planet, or rather the plan that preceded the actual saving...

The Observer Operation!

Chapter 221: The Observer (2)

The Observer Operation was deceptively simple, which was to use a high-mobility spaceship to speed towards the neutron star fragment and back. It was to check the validity of the fragment threat through the use of close-range surveillance equipment or with one's naked eye. Simultaneously, this would be the first time mankind could confirm the physical presence of a neutron star and not only through scientific theories and hypotheses.

With the Seeker's power, not even the smallest anomaly would escape one's eyes. The Seeker was more powerful than mankind's strongest surveillance machine. If there was any weakness mankind could exploit, it was certain that Ying would find it.

There were two difficulties to this plan. The first one was time. The neutron star fragment was set to collide with the sun within the next three years, but with mankind's current technological level and production power, to create a high-mobility Observer was a hard task. The multiple scientific conundrums and simulations were not things that could be skipped.

The second was distance, which had something to do with time. Even though the fragment would hit the sun in three years, its actual distance was still pretty far away. It would be accelerating as time went by, closing the distance. Therefore, to have the Observer leave the new planet, reach the fragment, then return to the planet, and still give time for humanity to come up with a solution would cover too much distance.

Therefore, it was truly a race against time!

Yao Yuan and a team of ‘natural disaster’ scientists descended the transport shuttle. Before them was a concrete wall about 180 meters tall. The outer layer of the wall was connected to a high-voltage circuit and could withstand the attack of any native animals on this planet, six-legged Black Dragon included.

The wall surrounded the Industrial City mankind had built on the new planet. Its permanent residence was about 6,000 people, among them 500 Defense Unit soldiers and 20 Black Star Troopers. The rest were technicians, engineers, a small amount of scientists, and their respective families.

This Industrial City took about eight months to complete. It exhausted many materials and resources. It had used almost 70 percent of the Hope’s construction robots in its construction... Of course, the finished product was worth it.

The new planet was rich with mineral resources. The Industrial City sat around mines of coal, gas, copper, zinc, and other rare minerals. A large river cut through the city as it sped towards the delta near the capital. By all intentions, this was to be mankind’s most important heavy industrialization area in the future. Therefore, buildings like smitheries, factories, and most importantly, the building platforms for the space combat jets were located here.

Using inspection as the reason, Yao Yuan led the scientists to Industrial City to check out the 70 percent completed defense-grade space combat jet. Yao Yuan wanted to know whether the jet could be modified to become the Observer.

The whole inspection process was rather tedious. It was heavy with political socialization, which Yao Yuan despised. That was why Yao Yuan had only visited the place twice after the construction of the place was complete. This would be his second time. He hoped the next time he was there, he could give his orders and leave. He didn't want to waste time participating in political drama.

The inspection didn't last for too long. Yao Yuan and the team of scientists left before noon. On the shuttle, after Yao Yuan waved the unauthorized personnel away, he immediately asked the few engineers and scientists, "So, how was it? Can we modify the defense-grade combat jet to the Observer?"

The leading engineer replied immediately, "Yes, Chancellor, the modification is entirely possible. The jet has more than enough space to support the livelihood of several hundred people for an extended period of time. Furthermore, it is already equipped with polymerized reactors that could be used to power particle accelerators. After our discussion, all of us unanimously agreed the modification is possible."

Yao Yuan sighed in relief, and he added quickly, "Then how long will it take, including both the completion of the jet and the modification?"

The engineer replied with some difficulty, "Chancellor, after our calculations... preliminary estimation puts us at six to eight months."

"Six to eight months, huh?" Yao Yuan started thinking. His initial plan also set about that long for the modification. He wouldn't be surprised if it took a year to complete. After all, they were not building a toy but a 1,700 meters long, 650 meters wide, and 400 meters tall monstrosity. The spaceship was the product of all 4th revolution technologies. It was with the use of construction robots that a spaceship of this scale could be completed so fast. If built using manual manpower, it would take upwards of eight years to complete.

Yao Yuan finally nodded and said, "Then I shall leave this in your hands. If you need manpower, do not hesitate to file a report to the government. We will have things arranged as fast as we can."

Just like that, the Observer Operation started in earnest. While the modification was underway, multiple groups of scientists started focusing their research on a high-power particle propulsion system. This was to be the research that was done on the propulsion device that was used to shove the mother nest into the sun. Naturally, the leading expert on this issue was Bo Li, the Whisperer in the field of physics.

Yao Yuan and Bo Li hadn't seen each other after that fateful day. In fact, Yao Yuan had dropped by the physics lab using different reasons ever since, but every time he was there, Bo Li would be absent as if she could sense that he was coming. After this happened several times, Yao Yuan stopped visiting the lab and stopped attempting to approach the girl he once planned to marry.

However, after the Observer modification started, things changed. Bo Li started appearing before him to discuss with him

details of the modification blueprint. Of course, she had reverted back to her previous indifferent self. There was no smile and she was always formal. This pricked Yao Yuan with guilt, and he was extra gentle around her.

But then...

"I want to be in the Observer." Bo Li sat down on the chair across from Yao Yuan.

Yao Yuan was taken by surprise. He was reading the report handed to him by Bo Li on the progress of the giant particle propulsion system. This latest upgrade had fixed the system's original weaknesses, which were instability and high energy consumption. The latest upgrade lowered the system's propulsion force to the previous variation's 80 percent, but it could run for a longer time and exhaust much less energy. Overall, this latest variation was a qualified and usable propulsion system. Other than the Observer, the Hope's propulsion system could also benefit from this upgrade. Its actual value was hard to gauge. According to the review by the Academy, this technology was at least the standard of the middle of the 4th revolution. It was unbelievable that Bo Li could come up with it.

Before Yao Yuan could rejoice in that fact, Bo Li said something that completely ruined his mood. He replied instantly, "Impossible! Do you know how dangerous this operation is? No one knows what this neutron star fragment is. No one knows what will happen from too close a contact to it. I will not allow you to join this operation!"

Bo Li said matter-of-factly, "I'm not begging you to let me join. You have to understand that this high-power particle propulsion system is entirely my project. Also, more than a handful of the technologies inside the Observer are from me, so I'm the one most familiar with their usage..."

"You're bargaining with me?" Yao Yuan narrowed his eyes. He suppressed his anger and said gently, "The Observer Operation is really very dangerous. Even I won't be a part of it. We have to be responsible to the human society at large. You're a Whisperer and the leading expert on everything physics. If anything were to happen to you..."

Bo Li was unfazed. She shook her head and retorted, "Our responsibility to human society... If that's the case, you should definitely let me join. If we find any machinery on the fragment, then my Whisperer power would come to good use. And I said I'm not begging you for me to join, I'm merely informing you. By the way, I forgot to tell you. The core of this improved propulsion system is not included in the report. If you want to have the technology, take this experimental one. Without the core technology, you'll have to be satisfied with the old, unimproved propulsion system."

After she said so, Bo Li stood up and turned to leave.

Yao Yuan was angry beyond words. He slammed down so heavily on the table that the smaller stationeries stumbled over the edge and scattered to the floor. Two soldiers that were stationed outside his room rushed in. They scanned the room curiously and they finally left after Yao Yuan waved them out.

Bo Li turned around and stared at Yao Yuan coldly. "What, you're going to slap me again? Or send me to prison? Either way, do you as wish. The point is that the technology is in my head. See if you can crack it open and take it out."

Yao Yuan stood up and met Bo Li's gaze. Slowly but surely, the fire in his eyes softened. He slumped back down on his chair, defeated, and uttered weakly, "... I'll have Ying watch over you so you won't attempt anything dangerous."

"...Go, I'll allow you to join the Observer."

Chapter 222: Arrival

Human Calendar Ninth year...

Three years had passed since mankind populated the new planet. In other words, one year after the neutron star fragment was discovered. At the same time, it had been five months since the Observer departed.

The Observer first circled around the new planet for acceleration and then used the gravitational energy of the planet to reach a speed of almost 500,000 meters per second. This alone took a month to prepare. Therefore, the actual time the Observer had spent in space was only four months. Four months of travelling at a constant speed of 500,000 meters per second meant that it had covered five thousand million meters, or thirty plus astronomic units!

Then the Observer started to decelerate. Three high-power particle propulsion systems fired up from the front for almost a week. Finally, the Observer had reached its destination, about ten million kilometers away from the neutron star fragment's forward trajectory.

"So how is it, Professor? Can the Observer survive being so close to the fragment?" Ying addressed the group of scientists who hovered around a bunch of equipment.

The leading scientist was Alan. With his status at the most influential astrophysicist on the Hope, he could very well bow out

of this dangerous mission, but his scientific curiosity couldn't be stopped. After all, this was an once-in-a-lifetime chance to observe the impossibility of neutron star up close. Therefore, he forced his way into the Observer.

At that moment, confusion colored his face. After studying the figures on screen, he turned to speak with Ying. "This is weird, simply too weird. Logically speaking, since the fragment is about one-thousandth of the sun's mass density, with our current location, such close proximity to the fragment, the Observer should have felt its gravitational pull, but why..."

"Why what?" Ying and the soldiers behind him asked.

Alan shook his head. "The Observer is not under the influence of any gravitational pull. Simply put, we are like idling in the wide cosmos, not near any celestial entity. However, both the latest electromagnetic radar and the traditional telescopic surveillance system show the presence of the fragment. This is too weird..."

A flash of excitement temporarily entered Ying's expression, but he quickly reverted to his usual serious self. He thought about it and said, "Professor, then do you think what the Chancellor said was the truth? The neutron star fragment is nothing but an illusion, a mind-trick played on us by a more powerful civilization?"

Alan hesitated. He discussed it with the group of scientists and Bo Li, who was given special permission to tag along, and replied, "Previously I thought the possibility of that was pretty low, but now I have my doubts. After all, gravity is a constant force. Since

the Observer is not exposed to any gravitational influence, then perhaps there is truly nothing there..."

By then, the Observer was incredibly far away from their solar system's sun. Previously, the Observer crossed a haphazard asteroid field. According to Alan, the field consisted of astronomical scraps that were pulled by the sun's gravity when it was forming. However, they failed to form a planet, so now they floated around the solar system's outer fringe.

Simultaneously, the Observer was ten million kilometers away from the fragment. The distance made it extremely difficult to spot the neutron star fragment via naked eye. Furthermore, the fragment didn't glow and was far enough away from the sun to not get warmed by its rays. These made observation incredibly difficult.

Everyone turned their eyes towards Ying. He was the captain of the Observer and the commander of the Observer Operation. Even though the data had confirmed that there was no source of gravity and thus they could already return home, technically speaking, the operation was still uncompleted.

Ying ruminated for a while before turning towards Zhang Heng. "Zhang Heng, what do you think? Do you sense any danger?"

Zhang Heng hesitated. He suddenly closed his eyes and focused. A long time later, he said, "This is a weird feeling, one I have not experienced before."

The people's interest was piqued. Zhang Heng was mankind's most powerful Diviner. His power hadn't let them down before, but what did he mean by a weird feeling? 'Is there any danger' was a yes or no question, so why 'there is a weird feeling'?

Zhang Heng explained after formulating his thought, "What I mean is that while I'm on the Observer, I feel safe, no signs of danger at all, but there..." Zhang Heng pointed at the direction of the supposed neutron star fragment and continued, "There is a huge danger warning down from that way, an inexplicable danger, like a ticking atomic bomb, one that could engulf us whole at any minute."

The room was silent. They had a hard time understanding the actual situation. First there was no gravitational pull when they neared the neutron star fragment, and now there was Zhang Heng's danger warning. Could it be that the fragment was actually an alien warship troop in hiding?

Ying suddenly said, "We'll take the Observer close to the fragment. The moment we picked up any trace of gravitational force, we'll stop or reverse. Zhang Heng, be on the ready; tell us if you sense any changes."

Since it was the captain's order, everyone moved to oblige. Furthermore, the crew themselves were curious. There were many questions that needed to be answered. Was there really a neutron star fragment? Under what kind of circumstances did it exist? How come there was no gravitational reading? What was this mysterious source of danger?

The Observer inched closer to the fragment cautiously at 50 kilometers per second. It covered only 180,000 kilometers per hour, and for a total distance of ten million kilometers, it was nothing.

Just like that, everyone stayed on high alert as the distance slowly closed...

Twenty four hours later, the Observer was only six million kilometers away from the fragment, almost half of the initial distance. However, from the Observer's surveillance devices, there were still no traces of a gravitational pull. It was like there was truly nothing before them.

It was a mixture of emotions for the scientists. They simultaneously wished for the neutron star fragment to be there and to not be there. It was, of course, a cause for celebration for the military men and women. The threat to the new planet seemed more and more likely to be a hoax.

Ying gave his order for the Observer to stop at six million kilometers from the fragment for everyone to rest and sleep. Surveillance was done in rotation. As Ying put it, a fresh body and mind is most important for one to stay alert.

The crew was instead tired after a twenty-four-hour-long state of heightened mental exhaustion. Three days of rest later, the crew was ready to resume the operation. Ying had the speed accelerated and they went ever closer to the neutron star fragment.

Five million kilometers, four million kilometers, three million kilometers...

There was still no gravitational reading on the devices, so more and more started to believe the neutron star fragment was just a deception. When the Observer was only 100,000 meters away, a shot of high-power energy beam was fired at the neutron star fragment's supposed location. A magnificent and unbelievable sight appeared before everyone's eyes.

When it hit the neutron star fragment, the energy beam spot curved and billowed out in the shape of a floweret. A 5,000 kilometer oval light orb appeared out of thin air, refracting and reflecting the light.

The photosphere was spinning and transforming at incredibly high speeds, causing a kaleidoscope-esque mirage. Every single transformation had its own unique, artistic appeal; it was like the Observer was given a postmodern light show. The Observer's energy beam was twisted into this surprising and eerie art.

"The light has refracted and it's escaping the neutron star fragment's gravitational scope in a parabolic state. God, the neutron star fragment is real... This is unbelievable, its gravitational force is constrained within its 5,000 kilometer radius. What kind of tremendous force could possibly do something like this? To so accurately inhibit the fragment's enormous gravitational force within a 5,000 kilometer radius?" Alan exclaimed in surprise. The shock was evident in all the other scientists' faces.

The neutron star fragment was real!

Chapter 223: Neutron Star Fragment

Other than the scientists, other people were equally shocked by the scene before them, but they never truly understood what was happening. They were witnessing light being twisted before their very eyes, and that was not something that happened every day.

Ying asked, "Professor, what does this represent? Why is the light creating these pictures?"

Alan replied, "Because of gravity. This fragment's mass is one-thousandth the sun's mass. That is so much greater than the new planet's as the new planet's mass is but only one over several ten thousands of the sun's mass. Furthermore, such a high mass is so compressed to a stage where we still can't spot it from one hundred thousand kilometers away.

"With such a high mass and small volume, the gravity field that it creates is powerful enough that even light can only traverse it in parabolic state. In other words, one needs to achieve the speed of parabolic light to overcome the gravitational pull of this fragment..."

Many pairs of eyes looked at Alan vacantly even after his explanation. He elaborated patiently, "Simply put, everyone knows a planet has gravity, but the fact is every matter has gravity, including you and me. However, for minute matter like us, the gravity we exude is so negligible that we normally ignore its presence. For bigger density celestial bodies, like Earth or the new planet, gravity is a tremendous force. It is because of gravity that the living organisms and atmosphere are pulled to the planet's

surface and do not escape into the wide cosmos.

"Therefore, to elevate from the planet's surface, one requires an opposing force that can overpower its gravity. For example, our Hope and Observer rely on the anti-gravitational system to achieve this. But what if we don't have access to this technology? Then we'll have to rely on speed, or more specifically, surface escape speed. In terms of Earth and new planet, the speed we need to achieve is about 10 kilometers per second.

"The higher the mass, the greater the surface escape speed. For something like the sun, its surface escape speed can reach up 600 kilometers per second..."

Suddenly, a soldier interrupted, "Professor, the speed of light is about 300,000 kilometers per second, right? If the fragment is only one-thousandth the sun's mass, then its surface escape speed shouldn't have reached a stage where light needs to enter the parabolic state, right?"

It was obvious that even though this was a person from the Barracks, his scientific knowledge was much greater than your run of the mill soldier.

Alan looked at him admiringly and said, "Logically speaking, yes, but you've missed out on one important detail... the fragment before us is not a simple neutron star fragment."

As he spoke, Alan lifted his finger to point at the still-changing light show. He continued, "Scientifically speaking, the smallest size

of a neutron star that can theoretically exist is one-tenth of the sun's mass, or it would collapse from a lack of internal force to pull it together. However, the fragment before us is one-thousandth of the sun's mass; this alone is beyond our current scientific comprehension...

"Secondly, the neutron star fragment isn't supposed to be something cold; its surface temperature is expected to be higher than 10,000,000 degrees, and how close are we to it now? Ten thousand kilometers. We should have been vaporized. Furthermore, the neutron star is supposed to have a strong magnetic field, so our surveillance device should have been fried when we were a hundred million kilometers away from it, much less ten thousand kilometers..."

Alan stopped and said in shock, "This goes to show how scientifically advanced the civilization behind this fragment is. Many of you might not understand it, but the force needed to compress the fragment's gravity, high temperature, high magnetic field, and high pressure to a 5,000 kilometers radius is just crazy. The 5,000 kilometers is practically a neutron star in itself, a field strong enough to fuse atomic nucleus into neutrons. Beyond that 5,000 kilometers radius, everything is like normal space... This is as if God has clamped his hands over this fragment and is moving it!"

Ying was silent. After a while he asked, "Professor, can you explain what is happening before you? Is the neutron star fragment really there? How can it exist? Can we get close to it? And is there any way for us to change its trajectory?"

This time it was Alan who went silent. Later, he picked up the thread of conversation, "Major Ying, I'll answer your questions one by one. First, from what we've witnessed, the neutron star fragment is real, or put it this way, this might not be the neutron star we have in our minds, but it is still a threat that is not less than the actual neutron star fragment. Therefore, if given the choice, I'd rather this neutron star fragment be real, because the other possibility of it being an alien creation is frightening..."

Everyone understood what Alan meant by that. If this fragment was an alien race creation, then humanity would have less than a zero chance of escaping a civilization this powerful. It wouldn't bode well for humanity.

"Anti-gravitational system."

Suddenly, Bo Li, who stood to the side, spoke up. Everyone turned to look at her curiously.

Ying frowned, but before he could speak, Alan nodded, "That's right. Major Ying, didn't you ask how can this thing exist? Professor Bo Li just gave us one of the best possibilities. Think of it like this: first we cut off a piece of the neutron star; don't ask me how, we just do. Then we find a box about 5,000 by 5,000 kilometers and put the fragment inside it. The box is invisible and untouchable, so it wouldn't be destroyed by the neutron star fragment itself. Then we fit a high-power anti-gravitational unit inside the box to contain the fragment's high gravity. This is how we will get the scenario we see before us, the neutron star's gravity field within the 5,000 kilometers box and nothing outside of it."

Ying thought about it and asked, "Then, Professor, can the Observer go near the fragment? As long as we are not within the 5,000 kilometers radius, we should be fine, right?"

Alan nodded. "Theoretically speaking, yes, but no one can tell what will really happen..."

Ying said firmly, "That's a risk we're willing to take. Since we're already here, there's no way we're returning without doing anything. I want to see for myself what this box you speak of is like. By the way, Professor, what will happen if we destroy this box?"

"Explosion, an explosion beyond the scale of which you can possibly imagine!"

After that, the Observer inched cautiously towards the fragment. Using the twisting light as guidance, the Observer could tell where the 5,000 kilometers danger limit was.

When the Observer was 10,000 kilometers away from the fragment, Ying put on a pair of special-grade sunglasses and activated his Seeker power.

Ying saw with his own eyes an oval-shaped object that was spinning at a high speed. Both of its ends were releasing waves of light. It was a light that was observable by the human eye, so it wasn't strong. No wonder they couldn't spot it from so far away. The whole object was surprisingly small; its radius was definitely smaller than 100 meters. It was a very small piece, so much smaller

than the Observer.

"That's the neutron star fragment?" Ying asked in surprise.

Then, Ying slowly studied the small piece's surface and surroundings. He didn't spot any suspicious protrusions. The fragment was slowly travelling in space as if on its own volition.

This observation lasted for hours until Ying was exhausted. The Observer was still stationed at 10,000 kilometers away from the fragment. The scientists were busy recording and analyzing, trying to decipher the mystery laid before them. Five days of intense research later...

The neutron star fragment was slated to enter the previously mentioned asteroid field. It was going to collide with several thousand asteroids of varying sizes!

The collision was predicted to happen in several hours. Everyone waited to watch the result with bated breath, because this collision would help to reveal the fragment's real identity. Was it corporeal or not? The question would be answered with the collision.

And then...

When the first asteroid entered the neutron star fragment's 5,000 kilometers radius... it disappeared!

Yes, it practically blinked out of existence. Even with Ying's

power, he couldn't tell what had happened. Was it vaporized? Or at the moment it entered the field, it was compressed into neutrons and absorbed into the fragment's neutron field? Or was it something else completely?

The same happened to the rest of the asteroids. They all disappeared into thin air the moment they were within the 5,000 kilometers range of the fragment. After the fragment passed through the area, it was like the asteroid field wasn't even there in the first place!

"Let's go back, back to the new planet..."

This was the only order an ashen-faced Ying gave after they witnessed the 'collision.'

Chapter 224: The Last Year

When the Observer returned to the new planet, it had been six months since they departed from the neutron star fragment. Since they couldn't possibly circle the fragment to provide acceleration, the return time was two months longer than the departure time. They only had the propulsion system to rely on.

In other words, there was only one and a half years remaining until the collision when the Observer reached the new planet. In truth, the escape preparation had started six months prior to that. The information brought back by the Observer only confirmed that the need for humanity to escape once more into the unknown and dangerous cosmos.

Of course, Yao Yuan didn't make this decision on his own. He came to this solution after long discussions with plenty of experts.

The neutron star fragment was confirmed by the Observer to be a real threat. It had the properties that they would expect from an actual neutron star fragment.

Even if the neutron star fragment was a fake, all the data, including the high mass density, high temperature, high magnetic field, if all of these were trickery and nothing was actually heading towards the sun, how did that change anything?

To be able to do something like this meant that the civilization had access to super impressive simulation technology. They could manipulate the data in such a way that mankind was under the

impression that a scientifically impossible celestial entity was hurtling towards the sun. Could mankind really stay?

You have no say in your destruction!

This sentence which Yao Yuan once read in a sci-fi novel appeared in his mind. When mankind was facing the infiltration of a far superior civilization, this sentence was uttered in the book.

You have no say in your destruction!

No matter whether the neutron star fragment was real or not, whether the threat to destroy this solar system was real or not, when the Observer confirmed that there was an actual entity behind the data and not just a row of numbers, it meant that mankind had no choice but to leave. The difference in technological level was simply too big. There was no room for negotiation. Unless he's a crazy, a human being wouldn't deign to negotiate with an ant.

Humanity was like an ant in comparison to the civilization that launched the neutron star fragment, fake or otherwise. Mankind would be blown away with a sneeze. It was already kindness on their part for allowing mankind to leave on their own. At least Yao Yuan could take comfort in the fact that all of humanity wasn't captured to be made into specimens...

If that was the case, mankind would have no choice but to abandon this newly acquired planet, this second home planet, and venture into endless space. However, at least... mankind would

still be alive!

Yao Yuan felt a fire of fury, melancholy, agitation, and madness burning inside him.

‘Perhaps you might have successfully chased humanity away from this solar system, but in the future, be it one thousand years, ten thousand years, or more, as long as humanity still has a place in the wide cosmos, still surviving strong, still improving, one day... one day we will return to squish you like a bug!’ Yao Yuan swore.

This sentiment was shared by many who knew the full truth.

In space, weakness was not a fault, but contentment at being weak was the biggest mistake!

Of course, they couldn’t just uproot and leave just like that. Humanity had time to prepare before the neutron star fragment entered the danger zone. They would not repeat the rash situation on old Earth.

The first thing to do was modify the two remaining spaceships so that they could warp alongside the Hope. For that, they needed to be physically chained together to the Hope when the Hope warped. Of course, the same had to be done with the Observer. This time, mankind would have three small and one big spaceship as they ventured in space. The Hope would be the anchor.

The Defense-Grade Spaceships One and Two would act as the protection fleet and enter combat whenever necessary.

The Observer, on the other hand, would fulfill the role of exploration ship. It could be dispatched whenever they stumbled across a space junkyard or new terrestrial planet to save the Hope the risk from doing so.

Simultaneously, the Hope would undergo its third large modification. There would be a basement two level and eighth and ninth levels. The basement levels would still be used as residential areas. With the increase in population, the demand for living space would naturally increase. This basement two level was made to solve that problem.

The eighth level would be the plantation level for the plants harvested from the new planet, like the Purple Plum and Milk Fruit. With the ecosystem of the new planet contained within this level, two species of omnivorous lizards found on the new planet could be reared here as well.

The ninth level would be a simulated ocean. This level was two times the height of other levels. It was about tens of thousands of meters tall, more than enough to create the simulation of a simple underwater environment. Inside it, species of the new planet's saltwater fish, Shell Web, the new planet's unique crustacean species, and edible seaweed would be bred here. This level hosted the largest group of the organisms that would be carried away on the Hope. There were about 70 species in total. Other than for human consumption, the other function was to feed the six-legged Black Dragons.

Yes, humanity's biggest reward on the new planet, the six-legged Black Dragons, would be taken on the ship as well. Even though the appetite for one Black Dragon equaled to the consumption of several hundred human beings, the Black Dragon, as a species of highly-evolved organisms, was not only useful for humanity's future research in the field of genetics and medicine, they were invaluable asset to the Hope's military force. If the Hope was infiltrated by alien robots again, the Black Dragons could take them out easily. Furthermore, when exploring new planets, they could act as hunting hounds alongside the Black Star Troopers.

Due to the food constraints, only twenty young Black Dragons and all the baby dragons that could be located were carried on the Hope. However, to prevent inter-breeding due to the small gene pool, the six-legged Black Dragons' sperm and ovum were greatly harvested.

Other than these changes, in the six months before the Observer returned, many mineral ores were mined and smelted into ingots to be stored inside the Hope. At the same time, plantations of many luxury items was underway. At a time like this, protection of ecosystem was no longer a concern. Forests were cleared away using wide-spread burning. Using the ashes of the trees as fertilizers, luxury plants like tea, coffee, cocoa, tobacco, and cotton were planted.

Even though the government tried their best to cover up the news about the neutron star fragments, the recent changes in governing policies tipped off more than a few sensitive experts. Facing the mass-scale deforestation, the protests died down quickly after the initial uproar. It was as if the whole of society was

affected by an ominous feeling. They put extra effort in their work, be it for manufacturing, planting, or mining. Everyone chipped in to gather as many resources as they could.

Journalists and photographers started taking down notes, videos, and pictures of the new planet. Even though no one spoke a word, everyone knew something big was coming...

The Observer returned to the new planet in this kind of environment. After Yao Yuan spoke to the members of the Observer, especially the scientists, he finally had the talk before the entirety of humanity.

"My fellow man, this is Yao Yuan. With a heavy heart, I'm given the task to inform all of you of saddening news. A neutron star fragment is heading towards our solar system's sun...

"Yes, just like how it was on old Earth, we are once more cornered into a helpless situation...

"The fragment was discovered about one and a half years ago. We did not give up immediately; a spaceship was given emergency modifications so that our men and women could identify the threat up close and try to figure out a solution, but we have failed. The spaceship has just returned, and after we passed the data it brought back to the Academy, they came up with the confirmation that our situation can't be helped...

"We have to once again abandon our home planet and venture into space...

"But I promise you, I will not leave behind a single of you. We will leave together!

"I also promise that this departure doesn't represent our surrender! We are weak now, but we are always improving and growing! So hear me out!

"Keep everything in your hearts, in your souls, and in your genes. Record everything that happens so that we'll be able to tell our children and have them tell their children that we lost several billion people when we were forced to abandon old Earth! We lost a new beginning when we were forced to abandon the new planet! Remember this pain and anger! Even hundreds, thousands, millions of years may pass... but this shall forever be a part of our history! One day, we will crush this alien civilization that has cornered us so! Crush them like bugs!

"One day, vengeance will be ours!"

Chapter 225: Departure...Life on the Run!

With the information brought back by the Observer, the Academy postulated the time remaining for humanity to stay at the new planet: a year and a half.

Even though it would take a year and a half for the neutron star fragment to make contact with the sun, one year from now, the fragment will enter the solar system. Its gravitational pull by then will be strong enough to disturb the celestial activities. To prevent accidents, mankind will only remain for another year at the new planet, just to be safe.

In other words, the next warp would happen in the middle of Human Calendar Year 10. This last year was absolutely precious to humanity.

The Hope's new three extra levels, construction of Defense-Grade Spaceships One and Two, mining and smelting of mineral ores, all these took time.

Of course to increase the quality of life, luxury plants were a necessity. If possible, Yao Yuan wanted to create several large agricultural spaceships specifically for plantation, but alas, time didn't allow it.

After Yao Yuan's speech, there was some extreme public opinions, like this was a government conspiracy aimed to suppress societal autonomy, but all that died out after the video taken by the Observer on the neutron star fragment was released. Instead, the

entire society was caught in an atmosphere of anger and melancholy.

Because they had no other choice but to once more abandon their home planet. It was sadness and fury born out of one's helplessness...

This also inspired mankind to go the extra distance!

In space, weakness was not a fault, but contentment at being weak was the biggest mistake!

During this last year on the new planet, certain people and things had also changed.

When Bo Li ascended on the Observer and spent one whole year in space, she was given plenty of time to straighten her thoughts away from Yao Yuan.

First, she understood that it was not that Yao Yuan didn't love her, because with his personality, he wouldn't agree to the relationship in the first place if he didn't. He was a respectable and responsible man with immense self-control. The best human being Bo Li knew. They had shared so many good moments together, laughing and crying alongside each other. Yao Yuan did love her, because it was unlike him to jump through all these hoops for just a fling.

Therefore, Yao Yuan did love her...

Then, why couldn't he give her a child? And what exactly did the word 'Hong' represent? Was he still trapped in the trauma from his past, or had he really treated her as a replacement?

Bo Li was not a conversationalist; it was her nature. Even though she had all these questions, she had no clue how to bring them up with Yao Yuan. It was one of the reasons why she wanted to get on the Hope. She needed some time away from Yao Yuan to straighten her thoughts.

During that one year in space, she tried conversing with Ying to pull some information on 'Hong' out of him, but Ying was even worse at people skills than she was. He was unresponsive most of the time. However, there was one instance where he let slip the fact that it was not because of 'Hong' that Yao Yuan didn't want progeny.

Due to that one sentence, Bo Li decided to have a deep talk with Yao Yuan after the Observer returned to the new planet. But she was hindered by her own lack of confidence; she just couldn't bring herself to talk to Yao Yuan. However, she realized that the woman called Ming Ji Jie had been trying her best to approach Yao Yuan.

Bo Li decided to bow out. Her intention to talk to Yao Yuan never once came into fruition. After the Observer returned, Bo Li locked herself up in her lab. Since this was the last safe year humanity had on the new planet, her dedication was praised by many who weren't in the know.

This was all a mounting headache for Yao Yuan. Ji Jie approached him after his break-up with Bo Li. This naïve girl-next-door actively pursued him, but not to a stage where it became suffocating. Even though Yao Yuan wasn't interested, he didn't have the heart to hurt her feelings. Therefore, even though Yao Yuan had rejected her, he couldn't firmly stop her from getting close to him. Just like that, under everyone's gazes, Ji Jie walked closer and closer to Yao Yuan.

Pulled between Bo Li, who he felt guilty about, and Ji Jie, who practically offered herself to him, the year passed by slowly for Yao Yuan. However, the year was eventually over.

This was the third seasonal harvest for the luxury plants. The Hope's warehouse was full beyond its capacity. Finally, an additional warehouse had to be built on the newly constructed basement two level. Simultaneously, a large quantity of precious metals like tombarthite and radioactive ores were distilled until their purest form and stored in ingot form. The Hope had reached its maximum capacity. If it hadn't undergone that circuit upgrade back on the meteorite base, it wouldn't be able to warp with this cargo weight.

In the last two months until the year limit was up, both Defense-Grade Spaceships One and Two started their field run. After one month of testing and moderating, the two spaceships were ready to go. The Hope evolved from the fleet of one to a fleet of four, one main ship, two defense ships, and one exploration ship. Humanity looked much like a space race now. It was definitely better than when they escaped from their home planet the first time. At least they wouldn't have to worry about immediate survival in space.

In the last month, the earlier fervor had died down. The government had stopped assigning jobs. Other than the Defense Unit and Black Star Troopers who kept up the patrols, the rest began their month-long holiday. They formed groups to go on trips, went sunbathing by the beach, or went into the plantation to have a new planet's fruits feast. Of course, these were all done with the accompaniment of soldiers. After all, it was their last month on this wonderful planet. Who knew when they would see the sea sky and sea next? Everyone was enjoying this last slice of heaven in their own way, memorizing and recording it for the future...

This day, Yao Yuan finished his small amount of document work early. It was only 2 PM. He recently received reports that Bo Li again spent another few days locked up in her lab. A few days ago, he saw Bo Li from afar, and she was looking worse for wear. It broke his heart. Yao Yuan found way to dismiss Ji Jie, who once again called to ask him out, and went to the lab.

At the lab, Bo Li was creating something alongside her alien robot prototype. Yao Yuan couldn't understand what it was or what its purpose was. He stood outside the door watching the girl concentrating on her words, ordering and moving the robot about. Finally, he sighed and coughed lightly to let Bo Li know of his presence. After that, he walked in and said, "Busy?"

Bo Li shuddered lightly. She didn't turn. Her hands slowed down for a split second before picking up her pace.

"..." Yao Yuan strode to her side wordlessly and suddenly grabbed her hands. "Bo Li, let's go see the ocean..."

Before Bo Li could respond, the eyes of the alien robot that stood beside her glowed menacingly red. Bo Li waved her hand in front of it and it reverted to inactivity.

Bo Li lowered her head stubbornly and said, "Let go of me. I don't want to see the ocean"

Yao Yuan eyed the alien robot curiously and shrugged. "You have to even if you don't want to. Who knows when we will be able to cast our sight on the ocean again after this warp."

Bo Li finally raised her head. She bit her lower lip. "Even so, that's my problem. In any case, I don't want to go to the beach."

Yao Yuan looked at Bo Li intensely and she held his gaze. They stared at each other for quite some time, before Yao Yuan said rather weakly, "Then... can you do it for me? I want you to accompany me as we take in the beautiful sea before we leave, just like... before this. I only saw the sunrise with you, today I want to enjoy the sunset with you. Can you be my date just this once?"

Bo Li's heart softened, but her mouth said, "I... don't want to leave the laboratory, so can you please stop disturbing me? You have Ming Ji Jie now, don't you? Why don't you go ask her?!"

Yao Yuan was slightly taken aback, but an inexplicable joy rose in his heart. He tousled Bo Li's hair with a giant smile like he used to and said, "There is nothing between me and her. I've always treated her like my little sister because she's an orphan with not many friends. She's like an extended family member. So that's

that, let's go watch that sunset!" Then he pulled Bo Li's hand and exited her lab.

For some reason, Bo Li didn't struggle. She allowed herself be pulled along by Yao Yuan to the beach. They sat there quietly, watching the sun drop below the horizon. As the night slowly fell, perhaps it was out of habit, Bo Li slipped her hand around Yao Yuan's arm...

The one year limit was up. The Hope, the Observer and the two Defense-Grade Spaceships, christened Defender One and Defender Two, lifted off from the new planet. Everyone stared at the new planet silently. As the horizon drew further and further away, the grass changed into a piece of green and the sparkling sea into a piece of blue. Eventually, the trees, the glades, the beaches, and the new capital shrunk into a spherical planet. Some cried, while others closed their eyes in prayers. However, there was a ball of fire burning within everyone...

A fire stoked by vengeance!

Finally, the four spaceships that were linked by metallic chains initiated another warp and blinked out of existence.

Chapter 226: Signal

Human Calendar Year 11 Month 7...

Yao Yuan looked out the window with melancholy. It had been one year and six months since they left the new planet. In this period of time, the Hope fleet had warped more than a hundred times since they warped daily. None of these more than 100 warps brought them any closer to a new home planet. Every time they ended up in empty space, the closest planet was several tens of thousands of light-years away.

At this kind of distance, surveillance was impossible, much less physical contact. After this had happened so many times, the Academy suspected that the warp exit would get further and further away from any solar system as the number of warps increased. As proof, the latest warp found the Hope to be a billion light-years away from a terrestrial planet.

Since they didn't understand the warp technology, they couldn't do anything about it. The warps were totally random. The lack of results for hundreds of warps slowly ate into the people's spirit, especially since they had just left a wonderful home planet.

Today was another warp day. All the related personnel were busy, bustling about the four ships. The members from Workshop were checking for damages while space cartographers were finishing up their mapping of the area. These would take a whole day to complete.

It was worth noting that since Defender One, Two, and the Observer were new spaceships, no one could guarantee their safety during warp. If the link was somehow broken during warp, it was certain that their fate would be over. It would be a fate worse than death.

Therefore, almost everyone remained on the Hope. The people would spread out to the remaining ships after and before warps to conduct repairs and maintenance. This provided quite a sizeable amount of jobs. Since leaving the new planet, the number of jobs available had significantly dwindled, causing the previously deflated H-coins value to bounce back. Of course, this was not really something worth celebrating.

On the other hand, when the people left the new planet, there was initially a fire burning within each and everyone, but one and a half later, that fire had become a slow-burning ember. The zeitgeist instead became one of depression.

This departure was something completely different from mankind's first departure from old Earth. They had no other choice then; venturing into space was their only hope and no one expected to find another home planet in their lifetime. Since there was no gain to begin with, there was not much of a sense of loss. The public knew life had to go on.

This time things were different. Mankind had obtained a new home planet, a new beginning, a new life. This kind of ending was hard to stomach for many. It felt helpless to have something valuable forcefully taken away. Therefore, as the fire died down, depression settled in. They had squandered one possible home

planet, so chances were they wouldn't be setting their eyes on another in their lifetime. They knew how rare these habitable terrestrial planets were...

This situation had Yao Yuan worried, but he couldn't do anything about it. Unless something big happened to distract the public's attention, this psychological quandary couldn't be solved so easily.

This was Yao Yuan's biggest worry. If allowed to fester, it would become a giant problem in the future. However, statistically speaking, they could warp a billion times and be no closer to another planet or interesting celestial body.

As Yao Yuan stared out the window thinking of solutions, he heard a series of rushed footsteps coming from behind him. He turned around and saw a bunch of workers run into his room in a hurry. He quickly asked, "Why? What's wrong? Has something happened to the Defenders or the Observer?"

The leading man said excitedly, in a mixture of both anxiousness and happiness, "No, Captain, it's a signal! We received a set of weird signals. After analysis by the central mainframe, it is more than likely to be signals coming from an alien civilization!"

Yao Yuan's heart skipped a beat. He didn't dawdle and move to accompany these workers to the surveillance room. People were waiting there to explain the situation to Yao Yuan in detail.

Like all the previous warps, all units started to move out to

accomplish their given tasks. The mission of the surveillance room was the most important because all external information would be received here. The place was also the information central for all the remaining units, so it could be said to be the busiest place on the Hope.

After today's warp, the surveillance room was like usual, full of people. A small group accidentally showed an electrical signal on screen but were shocked to find a set of weird signals. The set of signals was sent to the experts to be analyzed, and the result was that the signal was unlike the natural signal sent out by pulsar planets but something more complicated with its own set of logic and a large amount of information, something that was most likely to be...

A signal left behind by an alien civilization!

The signal was sent through space in electromagnetic wave form and the Hope just so happened to pick up a segment of it. However, due to the language barrier, the signal was unreadable. The elementary analysis could only conclude that the signal had its own unique logic and a large amount of information. They couldn't tell anything beyond that.

When Yao Yuan arrived, the workers were trying to convert the signal into audio or video files, but the process was highly challenging because the signal itself came with inscrutable quantum cryptography. The part that had been solved would rearrange itself as the cypher changed. This weird cryptography alone was enough to make the team excited. They hadn't even gotten into the actual message yet.

Yao Yuan could feel his heart racing after being told all of this, but after he calmed down, he was struck by a boatload of worry. Where did the signal come from? Who was behind the signal? Would the sender be friendly? How far away was the Hope from the signal's origin?

Many people rushed to the surveillance room after the news spread across the ship. There were representatives from the government, the Barracks and the Academy. The small surveillance room became even more crowded than before. Yao Yuan had no choice but to move everyone to a conference room nearby and called for a new meeting.

This meeting wasn't hosted by Yao Yuan. He stood off in a corner with Ren Tao and Xiao Niao discussing the impact of this signal.

Even though the signal hadn't been fully cracked, one thing was sure: there was once an alien civilization around or near the space the Hope was in now. The next course of action was naturally to decipher the signal, to at least gauge the general direction and location of said civilization, to tell whether it was still close by.

The three of them came to a consensus: if it was at all possible to avoid contact with this civilization, then that should be done. Mankind's technology was still stuck in early 4th revolution, so if the civilization was hostile and was at a higher technological level than mankind, then contact was inadvisable.

It was a fallacy that the more advanced the civilization, the more

cultured it would be.

In humanity's history, most colonization and wars were started by the more advanced societies...

Furthermore, the alien civilization had a greater chance to be more scientifically advanced than humanity, since not every civilization was forced into space. This reinforced another perspective... The alien civilization's reaction would probably depend on its own technological level in relative to mankind's technological level. There was no reason to expose oneself to such a debilitating situation.

Therefore, the three reached the conclusion that if possible, contact was to be avoided. Of course, if contact was inevitable, the key depended on both parties' technological levels. If the other party's level was almost similar to the Hope's, then contact was not an issue. After all, warfare would not simply occur since both parties had misgivings and scruples to worry about.

While the meeting was going on, another group of workers rushed into the room. This time, their expression definitely showed anxiousness.

"Cap-Captain, our surveillance just found out that the signal's origin is moving towards us...

"With a speed faster than light!"

Chapter 227: Merchant

"How did you people find out that the signal's origin is coming towards us at super light speed?"

Yao Yuan stared at Bo Li and the group of people around her curiously. It was them who suggested that the signal origin was heading towards the Hope with super light speed.

The news was simply too shocking. It was not that mankind didn't know that achieving super light speed is entirely possible; they had learnt of that possibility from the information siphoned from the junkyard civilization. For example, curvature navigation was the most likely way to break the barrier of light. In other words, while one couldn't achieve super light speed organically, it was doable via other methods.

Regardless of the technology used to achieve super light speed, being at such a high speed meant that one was literally faster than light. In other words, one was undetectable via naked eye or conventional surveillance. This sounded complicated, but it was actually fairly simple. This was because light speed was the maximum speed available in speed; this was an iron law that couldn't be denied, and even the junkyard civilization agreed so.

The maximum speed threshold for protons, electromagnetic waves, basically anything, was the speed of light!

Mankind's current surveillance technique, be it with the basis in light detection or magnetic wave detection, could only receive

information below the threshold of the speed of light.

After something achieved super light speed, it was akin to the courier losing his package, because the package couldn't catch up to his speed. To make a similar analogy, if one person was to shout and then travelled faster than sound, he would be able to arrive at his destination faster than his words and he would be able to hear them.

When one travelled faster than light, one would be invisible. This was because everything we see were images in our brain from light that reflected on objects. In other words, we didn't really see the object itself, but our eyes captured information carried by light that reflected from the objects around us. Therefore, if the thing travelled faster than light, it would be undetected because the light wouldn't be able to reach it and then carry the information to the surveillance devices.

Similarly, if the signal origin was moving towards the Hope with super light speed, so logically speaking, the Hope shouldn't be able to detect its existence unless it stopped halfway to allow light to hit it.

Herein lied the question: how could Bo Li confirm that the signal's origin was moving towards them with super light speed when it was technically undetectable?

Bo Li gave Yao Yuan a side-eye and explained calmly, "Of course from the signal itself." While she spoke, Bo Li pressed something in mid-air and a window-like a virtual keyboard and screen appeared before her.

The scientists behind Yao Yuan gasped audibly. One of them rushed forward to say, "Professor Bo Li, you've finally created the electromagnetic interactive screen? This is amazing!"

Bo Li nodded and turned to Yao Yuan. "Look at this. This is the signal that we've received. The key reason why we can confirm it was from an alien civilization and not a natural space signal is its regularity and complexity. In other words, the signal is released continuously and it has its own basic rhythm and frequency."

Yao Yuan nodded. "Yes, this I've known. What else?"

Bo Li pressed on the virtual keyboard again and something else appeared on the virtual screen.

"When you were in the meeting, we were analyzing this signal. I realized that the signal's frequency has increased," Bo Li said as she pointed at a wave pattern chart.

Yao Yuan frowned. Before he could make light of what Bo Li said, a scientist behind him chimed in, "Professor Bo Li, you mean to say that the signal's origin is increasing its speed?"

Bo Li nodded again. "Yes, that is exactly what I mean. This frequency increase can be explained if the signal's origin increases in speed. After that..."

Yao Yuan quickly interrupted, "Wait a minute, what are you guys

talking about? Can someone please explain to me what's happening?"

Bo Li tossed him another side-eye before pointing at the screen and explaining, "This is a logical conclusion. Look, this series of signals is continuous and systematic, in other words, the signal originator has set a specific schedule. For example, if we send out an SOS message from the Hope and set the message at an interval of every ten seconds, it is impossible for the message to go out after five seconds the first time and then twenty seconds the second time, right? I believe it is the same for the alien civilization. After all, such technology is precise and accurate. The signal originator's technology is high enough for the frequency to not be haphazard, isn't that right?"

Yao Yuan thought about it and confirmed, "You're right. Unless the transmitter is broken, the frequency should be constant."

Bo Li continued, "That's right; however, while you were in the meeting, I realized that the frequency of the signal has changed. The interval has increased by seven seconds. I thought it was our devices that malfunctioned, but after analysis, I realized that the signal's frequency kept increasing. There was nothing wrong with our surveillance devices; it was because the signal's origin was increasing in speed."

Yao Yuan entered another deep thought. Xiao Niao, who stood beside him, also entered the Thinker state. The only exception was Ren Tao. He looked around with a bored expression. In fact, while no one was paying him any attention, he walked towards the surveillance room's wall and climbed up one of the taller pieces of

equipment...

"I think I understand what you mean," Yao Yuan said after a long time. "Since light speed is a constant, it won't be affected by the change in the speed of the signal's source. In other words, even if the signal's source achieves half the speed of light, the transmitted signal will still be travelling at light speed. However, since the frequency of the signal changes, it means that the signal's source must be travelling faster than light, is that right?"

Bo Li nodded and confirmed, "That's right. We understand that FTL space propulsion systems like warp drive is not physically going beyond the speed of light but changes the warp velocities before and after the warp to break the barrier of time. However, warp drive has a giant limitation: it needs an extremely large space for accelerating and a long time for acceleration to enter warp speed.

"During this process, the spaceship's speed will steadily increase. When the spaceship is initially accelerating and the speed is low, the signal is travelling at the speed of light. After the speed has significantly increased, the signal is still travelling at light speed. However, for the one at the receiving end, the frequency of the signal will appear to have increased. The closer the origin is to breaking light speed, the smaller the interval between the signals. When it reaches light speed, all of the signal will arrive at once, and after it breaks light speed, the signal will be left behind and will be received after the origin has left."

At this juncture, Guang Zhen raised a valid question. "If that's the case, how can you be so sure that the signal's origin is still

before us and has not left this place?"

Bo Li frowned impatiently, but she still slowly explained, "Because of the increasing signal frequency. If the origin was going away from this place, the frequency of the signal we receive would be decreasing, as in having a larger interval."

Here, Bo Li waved her hand and looked toward Yao Yuan. "Of course, this is only one of the possibilities on why the signal's frequency is increasing. What to do with this information is still up to you."

Yao Yuan had an inner bitter smile. It had been half a year, but Bo Li was still indifferent towards him. She didn't reject his advances, nor did she reciprocate them. However, he liked it. When he was sometimes aroused, he needed to take matters into his own hands, literally... Anyway, this was not a time to think about thing like this.

Yao Yuan massaged his temples. "Regardless, the possibility of this hypothesis is very high. So, we're dealing with warp drive? That is the technology available between the peak of the 4th revolution and early 5th revolution. Based on the information we received from the junkyard civilization, there are four levels to space travelling. The first is under the speed of light, the second is faster than light, the third is wormhole, and the fourth is star gate. This means that we're dealing with an at least Level 3 Civilization. From the looks of things, it's better that we warp immediately to avoid any possible confrontation..."

Suddenly, the Prototype alien robot that stood beside Bo Li

produced a flashing light in its eyes. Soon after that, a set of signals appeared on Bo Li's virtual screen.

Everyone crowded around the screen to see what had happened. Bo Li read from the screen and said, "The junkyard civilization appears to have made contact with this signal origin before. My robot automatically translated it! Let's see, what it says here..."

Xiao Niao cut in and read it out loud.

"Space Recycling. Recycling all types of technology and biomass!"

Chapter 228: Hypothesis

The translation was simply too suspicious. Many were at a loss for words...

What did it mean by "Space Recycling, Recycling all types of technologies and biomass?" This was like an advertisement for a recycling company...

There were plenty of blank expressions in the room, befuddled by this message that was seriously inconspicuous. After who knew how long, Wa Luo suddenly said, "What the f*ck?! The signal is from a garbage man?"

The shock was warranted. The alien civilization that could space warp was a waste picker...? This was too suspicious.

Someone asked, "Could the message have been mistranslated? After all, there must be plenty of linguistic differences between our language and theirs."

These words were echoed by many. After all, the idea that such a powerful civilization was a waste picker didn't sit well with many. Many even tossed it out as nonsense.

Bo Li gave the screen a closer look and concluded, "No, the translation is correct. This signal is part of the junkyard civilization's database, and the signal's origin is someone they had made contact with before. I remember now, this signal belongs to the merchant civilization that they traded their two cosmic

adaptors with!"

Merchant civilization?

The Hope, or more specifically, the human race within the Hope, hadn't really had actual contact with other alien civilizations. However, they did know of their existence through other means.

The first was, of course, the junkyard civilization that contributed greatly to mankind's current technological level. The second was the merchant civilization that traded with the junkyard civilization. The third was the liquid robot civilization that demolished the junkyard civilization. These were the three first alien civilizations humanity encountered.

Technically speaking, the mother nest alien and the aquatic civilizations consumed by the mother nest alien were alien civilizations known to mankind as well.

The above were the alien civilizations mankind had some knowledge about. Of course, the wide cosmos was home to more civilizations than these, each with their own uniqueness and technological levels.

When Bo Li mentioned the merchant civilization, everyone thought back to the information they received from the junkyard civilization on this merchant civilization.

The incomplete information taken from the junkyard civilization

stated that the merchant civilization wasn't exactly a race but a space conglomerate made up of several alien races. Its technological prowess was between the peak of the 4th revolution and the early 5th revolution. The conglomerate had perhaps more than a thousand individual ships across the cosmos.

They were the middle man between many civilizations, trading technologies, materials, and biomass. The merchants slowly picked up pieces of information and improved themselves from the technologies that passed through their doors.

They were a unique space civilization.

In comparison to the many space civilizations, the space merchants were one of the rare 'peaceful' civilizations. At least they didn't present themselves as predators. Even when treating civilizations way below their level, they presented themselves as traders or merchants. They were in popular demand for many civilizations that had just entered space, or level 2 civilizations. This was because they could get the important star navigation maps or valuable 5th revolution technology from the merchants. These were essential to the survival of level 2 civilizations.

When the identity of the signal's origin revealed itself, another set of questions appeared. The main one being: should they warp immediately to avoid the merchants?

The argument for immediate warp was because mankind had no idea who the signal's origin was. Yao Yuan decided to warp in case the alien civilization posed an insurmountable threat to the Hope.

However, now that they knew about their identity and modus operandi, the thought process would be different.

Yao Yuan's mind started spinning in overdrive. First, humanity couldn't avoid contact with other space civilizations forever.

Before this, he had discussed the [theory of Black Forest](#) with a group of scientists, and the Academy had vetoed the theory directly. According to the scientists, the first rule of the Black Forest Theory, which said that light speed was a barrier that couldn't be broken, was already wrong. The highest travelling speed in space was light speed. However, technology like warp drive, wormhole, and star gate completely undermined the Black Forest Theory. Since the first rule was wrong, the other rules were questionable as well.

This meant that communication between space civilizations was entirely possible. Of course, while symbiotic relationships weren't a given, it also didn't mean that every space civilization must necessarily be out to harm each other.

In other words, for humanity to really be a part of the cosmic society, communication with other space civilizations was inevitable.

Therefore, if the signal's origin was really the space merchants, then it didn't seem it was necessary for humanity to warp. After all, compared to other unknown space civilizations, having the space merchants as mankind's first contact with space civilization

might be a good thing. At least they could exchange information or even obtain 5th revolution technology like the warp drive from the merchants!

The Hope's space warp technology, while high up there, was highly unpredictable. The warp exit was a random toss of the dice. To get stuck within the new planet was nothing; what if the Hope suddenly warped into the sun, near a neutron star, or a bottomless black hole? The result would be the extinction of humanity within the blink of an eye.

Not only that, the Hope would always warp out at a location several light-years away from a solar system. The distance of half a light-year was already a despair-worthy distance for humanity, much less several light-years. Therefore, more often than not, mankind had to abandon the possibility of discovering a new home planet. However, with the access to the warp drive technology, wouldn't that issue be solved? The discovered planets might not be naturally suitable for human habitation, but with humanity's current technology, they could terraform the planet easily!

Therefore, warp drive was a super valuable technology to have...

Weighing all the pros and cons, contact with the space merchants seemed to be more beneficial than not...

Of course, since the lives of the whole of mankind hinged on this decision, Yao Yuan had to be extremely cautious about it. Even if he had made the decision in his mind, he still needed to consult it with Xiao Niao and Ren... Where was Ren Tao?

Yao Yuan looked around curiously, but he failed to spot Ren Tao. This made him scratch his head. Wasn't Ren Tao in the room minutes ago? Did he leave without them noticing?

Finally, it was eagle-eyed Ying who spotted him. He found Ren Tao spacing out on top of a 10-meter-tall device. Ying had someone fetch him down, but the question of how he even got up there in the first place was one that no one could answer...

When Yao Yuan sought their opinions, the two of them gave differing answers. Xiao Niao agreed with Yao Yuan. "I believe it is fine for us to stay. Just like you said, instead of placing our bet on a future unknown civilization, why not have our first space civilization contact be with the space merchants? The one thing we're lacking the most right now is information, information on other space civilizations, like how many are there, what are their customs during communication, the technology variance, and the likes. Valuable information like this we can procure from the space merchants. Furthermore, they're willing to take anything for trade, right? We have some valuable minerals that we can trade for the information."

Ren Tao's answer was different. He said, "I think the key to staying or not depends on whether the space merchants have had contact with us humans before or not..."

While others were confused by his observations, Yao Yuan responded directly, "Of course they couldn't have gained contact with us before; this is our first time being so physically close to them."

Ren Tao shook his head. "Have you forgotten about the humans that left Earth before us? Their technology couldn't be better than ours since it is statistically impossible for them to stumble into a junkyard civilization that they could siphon technology from. If they ran into the space merchants, I don't think it would end up well for them. After all, all the civilizations that ventured into space were level 2 civilizations. The government officials' spaceship technology was only level 1. Do you think the space merchants would trade with them, or capture them to analyze the technology that allowed them to venture into space in the first place?

"They would find out the number of disproportionate cosmic adaptors within humanity. Wasn't it stated before that their most valuable commodities were cosmic adaptors...

"What do you think will happen when they run into us, level 2 civilization human beings?"

A theory put forth by novelist Liu Ci Xin in his sci-fi novel, Tri-Body.

Chapter 229: Contact

Other than Xiao Niao and Ren Tao's opinions, Yao Yuan also consulted a large amount of scientists and soldiers, including Guang Zhen. Yao Yuan came to a conclusion especially after he asked about the activation time necessary for space warp and the like.

Wait!

Yes, the minute possibility mentioned by Ren Tao aside, based on what they knew about the space merchants, they were still a space civilization available for contact. The space merchants' technology was indeed higher than mankind's, but not to the point where mankind couldn't do anything about it. This was because the space merchants' technology had an irregular growth.

In other words, unlike humanity or the junkyard civilization, which started from the ground up and improved slowly from the 1st revolution to the 2nd revolution so on and so forth, the space merchants' technological advancement didn't follow a logical advancement. Their advancement came from opportune trades. Therefore, even though they might have 5th revolution technologies, like the warp drive, their weapons and ships were still from the 4th revolution.

Because of all this, the space merchants were indeed the best space contact currently for mankind. If the merchants intended to do them harm, they could still counter back. After all, they only needed to buy some time for space warp to initiate. The chance of complete extinction was nearly zero.

Therefore, Yao Yuan's final decision was to stay and wait for the space merchants to draw near.

Of course, all combat personnel on the Hope went into high alert as a precaution. It never hurts to be careful. No matter what kind of flag the space merchants flew on the outside, the main thing they were after was profit. The space merchants had a good reputation because perhaps they still hadn't come across a profit big enough for them to turn physical. If the profit was high enough, they could risk everything for it.

After all... the Hope had more than a hundred Homo Evolutis!

In the following days, maintenance was done on the Hope's weapon system. It could go into combat whenever it wanted. People were assigned to control the two Defenders, and dry runs were carried out. Other than that, the space combat jets were oiled and maintained. Lastly, the Hope activated the creator's particle to cover its surrounding space.

From the information taken from the junkyard civilization, this was the first step whenever contact was gained between two space civilizations. The activation of the creator's particle not only served as a precaution but also proof that the originator was not a primitive race. It acted as a combat deterrent.

Furthermore, the space merchants were in the middle of a warp drive. During warp, at least by 4th revolution standards, all external signals were undetectable. Therefore, to prevent the

merchants from missing the Hope's location, the creator's particle was to allow them to know where the Hope was.

Several days later, everything was ready on the Hope. The public were also given knowledge of what was happening: mankind was going to make its first official contact with another space civilization.

A large group of people were very unsupportive of this idea. If gaining contact with the space merchants represented danger, why couldn't they just avoid it completely? Wait until mankind was advanced enough and then have the contact. Why did Yao Yuan choose to risk all of their lives?

There were many bearing this particular opinion...

Of course, Yao Yuan knew of these. The identity of the few opinion leaders were known to him as well. Many of them were members of the House of Representatives and had the history of doing this in the past. However, Yao Yuan didn't make a move, not even a sly one, he was waiting...

On the nineteenth day, a large, spherical spaceship suddenly appeared twenty light-years in front of the Hope. It materialized out of thin air, without any warning. After it made its appearance, the spaceship stood still as if waiting for mankind to make its move.

Such a sudden appearance was one of warp drive's important characteristics.

During warp drive, the ship itself was at zero speed. Warp drive was a space distortion technique that dragged the space around the spaceship forward. In other words, it was as if the spaceship was standing on an electronic space mattress that was pulled forward. The speed didn't lie with the spaceship.

Therefore, when the spaceship exited warp drive, the spaceship was immobile. There was no issue of acceleration or deceleration.

When the spherical spaceship made its appearance, the Hope was bombarded with a series of signals. For the next few minutes, the large spaceship remained silent with no outward movements.

From Yao Yuan's observations, the spherical spaceship, while not larger than the junkyard civilization's main ship, was about 50 kilometers in radius and was spinning on its own axis. Unlike the spaceship pictured in sci-fi, the surface of the spaceship was not smoothed out and gleaming; instead, it was bumpy and crooked, giving it the appearance of a ball that had been patched one too many times.

The Academy picked up much information about this spaceship from its appearance alone, like how they didn't have anti-gravitational technology. Granted the technology was beyond what mankind should have as well.

Other than that, based on the spaceship's size and the size of each individual 'patch', one could basically predict where was the spaceship's entrance, weapons ports, signal generators, and the

rest.

While the Hope was still parsing the spherical spaceship, the latter cracked open, or rather the entrance to the spaceship opened. Because of the spaceship's unique shape, it looked like an egg being cracked from within.

After that, an about 200 meters long small spacecraft with the classic plate-like UFO shape spun slowly towards the Hope.

It was not that the spacecraft didn't release signals, but the whole area had been covered by the creator's particle, nullifying all transmissions. However, the fact that the other party had sent over a smaller spacecraft instead of coming over with the whole spaceship was a sign of peace.

Watching this gesture of peace made the entire society on the Hope let out the breath they didn't know they were holding. However, the reprieve was temporary. After all, it could be possible that the spacecraft was rigged with explosives. When the spacecraft neared the Hope, the electromagnetic shields on the Hope and the Defenders came up. The ECS system was also activated to prevent long-distance attacks.

Thankfully, even as the spacecraft neared the Hope, neither the spherical main ship nor the small spacecraft did anything out of the ordinary. They didn't activate their own ECS system. When the spacecraft entered the Hope's creator's particle null zone, the Hope received all sorts of signals immediately.

All the people started to get busy, dissecting the signal, comparing the signal, categorizing the signal. However, for some weird reason, Bo Li's prototype robot didn't translate any of the received signals. Bo Li tweaked the robot's internal server but failed to find any translating software, so the issue of the mysterious translation had to be put on the backburner.

Thankfully, the space merchants kept sending signals of varying frequencies and contents. Obviously, it was trying to find one that humanity could hopefully understand. In less than 10 minutes, the spacecraft had sent more than a thousand different signals, but humanity still understood none of them. While the atmosphere slowly dropped towards despair, someone suggested the Hope to send their signal out, maybe the merchants had access to some kind of universal translator device.

However, this suggestion was vetoed by Yao Yuan, Xiao Niao, and Ren Tao. The obvious risk aside, what if there was validity behind Ren Tao's fear? Tipping humanity's hand to the space merchants was definitely not a bright idea. It was absolutely not necessary to reveal humanity's identity to the space merchants until it could be sure that there was no harm in doing that.

Suddenly, the spacecraft sent over a set of signals that the Hope's computer could process immediately. It was a signal similar to...

The junkyard civilization!

Chapter 230: Value

Of all the alien languages, this junkyard civilization's language and culture was the one most familiar to mankind.

At the time mankind was cornered into a dead-end, they had plenty of the junkyard civilization's literature but no way to understand them. After pooling the resources of many linguists and historians, mankind finally had a cipher available to translate the junkyard civilization's language. Over the years, the translation effort hadn't stopped. There were new corrections and additions made to the cipher. Overall, the Hope's experts' familiarity with this space language was similar to how they were familiar with English, French, or German.

Therefore, when the space merchants sent a signal parsed in the junkyard civilization's language, everything clicked. Mankind's identity was not revealed and they could still communicate with the merchants. The expert on the junkyard civilization's language was ushered to the surveillance room and very quickly the first set of signals was translated.

"We are the 3,400th unit from the space merchant conglomerate. We would like to ask the space civilization before us: do you have anything to sell or trade? We have the highest Level 3 and 4 space civilization technologies, a large amount of rare materials, and genetic prints for many species of biomass. We buy anything and sell anything."

People in the room stared at each other. They didn't expect the other party to be so direct. There was no preamble, like "we come

in peace" or the likes. They went straight to the point: we're here for business, are you up for trade?

This was not the space contact many people in the room had in mind. This was like a night market stall owner hawking his wares. It was rather... unbelievable.

Such direct communication rendered the diplomatic parlance some of the experts thought up useless. To use back the same analogy, if you started talking about peace within space and such lofty ideas to the night market hawker, he would think you're crazy.

This was how humanity felt then. Initially, they thought to approach this contact diplomatically, but they didn't expect the other party to be so direct. Looks like this team before them was not a first time trader; they were extremely familiar with the trading process. Get to the point and cut the crap.

This raised another question for mankind: what to buy and what to sell?

Actually, this question was already heavily discussed in the past ten days. First, knowledge about the distribution of most space civilizations and their unique culture was necessary. If not, it was possible that a sign of respect from mankind's side, like a marching band, might end up as an offense equivalent to our flipping the bird to some space civilizations. Wouldn't it be crazy to have a war over something frivolous like this?

The next would be the warp drive technology and the theories behind it. This was so that the Academy could hopefully expand upon it and produce more technologies from it.

Other than the two necessary items, the rest depended upon what other items were on sale. Technologies like terra-forming might be useful as well.

But what did mankind have to trade?

From the merchant's message, at least mankind had valuable ores, species' DNA prints, and technologies from 4th revolution or below available for trade. Not to mention the alloys and energy crystals created by the alien plants.

However, Ren Tao warned that anything could be traded, but the products of the alien plants must be kept a secret.

Of course, that secrecy hinged on one thing, and that was whether the space merchants had come into contact with other human beings or not.

If they had, then three things were certain. One, human civilization had many cosmic adaptors; two, human civilization had access to space warp technology, a technology greater than warp drive, wormhole, and even star gates; last, human civilization had anti-gravity technology.

The first problem aside, the second point meant that with space

warp technology, mankind could go to any location in space. It was a technology that ignored the limitations of time and space.

However, there was a major weakness to this technology: the greater the cargo weight, the higher the amount of energy used in warp. Of course, if the warp was not to warp a whole planet but just a small fleet, the energy consumption issue could still be solved via the means of polymerized reactors. However, what about the conductors and storage units to support the large surge of energy during warp?

Based on mankind's current technological level, there was no product in the 4th revolution that could rival the alien plant's products for this purpose. Without the alien plants, mankind couldn't have supported the space warping of a maximum loaded Hope and three other spaceships. In other words, the conductors tempered from the alloys produced by the alien plants were the key. Only thanks to it was space warping with large loads possible. The space merchants' giant, spherical spaceship would require the plant's alloy to support space warping.

The third question was simple: if mankind didn't need to fully crack and understand the theories behind it, copying it was entirely possible. However, to apply it on a large spaceship, a high computing power was required.

The only reason the Hope could add two more extra levels was because the central mainframe had been updated to the latest 4th revolution electromagnetic computers. However, what about the space merchants? Could their central computer be at the 5th revolution already?

No matter what, according to the worst case scenario put forth by Ren Tao, anything that had to do with the alien plant shouldn't be revealed.

After Yao Yuan mulled over Ren Tao's warnings and words, he told the person responsible for communications, "Use the junkyard aliens' language to reply to them that we have plenty of valuable minerals and technologies from level 2 revolutions as well as DNA prints for native flora and fauna from Earth up for trade. We are interested in many things, so if possible, ask them to provide us with a list."

Very quickly, the signal was sent from the Hope and the signal from the spacecraft ceased. After a few minutes, the signal returned in the junkyard alien's language.

"Alright, please wait for a moment while we compile the list. However, since we have too many things for trade, to save time, please be clear about what you need. Is it materials, technologies, or biomass? We buy anything and sell anything."

Yao Yuan responded, "We only need technology and we value information, if they would be kind enough to provide that."

After Yao Yuan's words were transmitted over, a large amount of electronic signals surged into the Hope's computer. The amount of data was so large that the people manning the computer thought they were being DDOSed.

However, it turned out that the amount of amount was so large because it was a 3D image. After the person moved the data into the central mainframe, the data was identified as 3D video files and then was slowly categorized.

First, there was basic information of the cosmos, such as constellations, solar systems, dangerous locations in space, notable planets, and distance to places called ‘Shelters.’ ‘Shelters’ were places in space where multiple civilizations congregated, a pit stop of sorts. Yao Yuan felt his heart twist when he saw the word.

After that came the data on the technologies. There were more than a handful of curious ones, like how to handcraft a stone axe, how to mine and smelt iron, how to wire a light bulb, and even how to create tesla coils. The technologies were listed in a long list. The amount of information was so large that the whole room spent literally hours just to go through the 3D images.

However, there was one thing that gave people pause. Behind every data, material or technology was a term called ‘value.’

For example, how to handcraft a stone axe was valued at ‘0.0000000002.’

While information on the nearest shelters, such as basic information, coordinates, and space chart navigation were valued at respectively 50,000, 70,000 and 100,000. The discrepancy was obvious.

Among this information, Yao Yuan also realized... the highest

technology offered was only until the 4th revolution, there was nothing from the 5th revolution!

"Tell them this and make sure that you don't miss a word, what we need are...

"Technologies from the fifth industrial revolution, or in other words, technologies for Level 3 and 4 civilizations!"

Chapter 231: The Face of Trade

Yao Yuan's words quickly reached the merchants. After several hours of complete silence where all signals stopped and the spacecraft returned to the spherical spaceship, probably to exchange information with the spaceship within the spaceship's own creator's particle null zone.

In the few hours, speculations started to fly on the Hope.

First, it could be confirmed that the space merchants had technologies from the 5th revolution. Even though the technologies might not be complete, since they could use warp drive, it meant that at least they had entered the 5th revolution.

The reasoning behind this was fairly simple: science does not have exponential growth. In other words, it was impossible for one to ask about trigonometry first then about planetary fuel. This kind of leap in scientific thinking only exists in sci-fi.

Of course, if we're talking about only the product of science and not science itself, then this is possible. Simply put, with colors painted on computer keys, even the chimps could be taught how to use the computer. The two had nothing to do with each other. Can you ask the chimp to explain the science behind the computer even though he may know how to use it? The answer is obvious.

The reality works as such as well. It was undeniable that the space merchants had access to many of the 5th revolution's products, but for some reason, the space merchants didn't pursue

an in-depth research in these technologies. This sounded unbelievable, but based on what humanity had observed thus far, this happened to be the truth.

For the space merchants, when they got hold of 5th revolution technologies, instead of studying them like how humanity would do, they employed them in ways of trade.

It was also worth noting that even though mankind's scientific products were only at the initial 4th revolution level, the scientific studies behind them had reached late or the peak of 4th revolution.

Therefore, if given a 5th revolution technology, even if it might not be complete, it could very well be the catalyst that mankind needed to initiate another scientific revolution.

Perhaps the space merchants knew that. That was why they only showed the Hope the choice of 4th revolution technologies and below. Their intention was clear: they didn't want to help mankind proceed to the next revolution.

Soon, the spacecraft returned to the Hope's null zone and a series of signals came rushing at the Hope.

"We do have technologies from Level 3 and 4 civilizations, but these technologies are highly valued. It was through many trades that we were able to procure these technologies, so if you wish to purchase these technologies, you have to convince us that you're able to afford it. We purchase anything: products, technologies,

material and even organic life forms."

This was the space merchant's response. The Hope quickly compiled the list of the items they were to trade based on the earlier 3D images that the space merchants had sent over. Of course, since the nomenclature was different for different civilizations, to prevent confusion, the biochemical make up was provided alongside the list that was sent to the space merchants.

After the space merchants received this information, they categorized them one by one and then added values to each of them.

Common metals like iron, treated or otherwise, were valued at 0.5 per ton, while other metals were given pitifully low values. The highest valued metal was platinum, but that was also only at 0.7 per ton.

If that was the case, even if the entire the Hope was sold, it wouldn't be enough to purchase common space information.

Next was radioactive minerals. They were valued at a higher number than most expected. For example, uranium was 7 per ton, while other minerals were even higher. The highest among this category was an unknown mineral collected from the nebulous cloud. It was valued at 370 per ton. Even the associated ore of this mineral was valued at 10 per ton.

Suddenly, Ren Tao furrowed his brows and gave an audible "hmm." Xiao Niao, who stood beside him, initially didn't have any

reaction, but after witnessing Ren Tao's curious response, he started scanning the data in closer detail. After a while, he too repeated the "hmm." However, neither of them chose to elaborate.

The remaining experts focused on the list and continued calculating the value of these materials. However, their faces gradually dropped as the time went on. In the end, the entire store of minerals on the Hope was not even worth the value of 10,000!

Selling the whole warehouse of the minerals wasn't enough to even purchase common space information, much less 5th revolution technology! In other words, mankind's current wealth was pitifully small.

Next would be the transfer of all the DNA prints. However, before the transfer, both Ren Tao and Xiao Niao said in unison to not send the prints for the alien plant, Black Dragons, and the mother nest alien.

Compared to the minerals, the DNA prints were much more valuable. For example, the simplest wheat DNA print and ten samples were valued at 100 plus, while the lowest value for animals were at 500. When the group received this information, the atmosphere in the room visibly improved. Ren Tao and Xiao Niao nodded their heads slowly as if they had been expecting this kind of response. However, they didn't say a word and waited patiently for the transmission to finish.

Yao Yuan noted the change in the expressions and he had many questions in his mind, but he knew it was not the time. After all the DNA prints were sent, the person in charge was going to send

information on the Hope's technology but was stopped by Ren Tao.

"Stop here. Tell the space merchants that's everything we can offer. If it's still not enough to purchase the 5th revolution technology, then consider the trade canceled," Ren Tao told the person in charge.

The person snuck at look at Yao Yuan to seek his approval. Yao Yuan stared curiously at Ren Tao and Xiao Niao, but the two of them had on an indifferent countenance like there was nothing wrong with the request.

Yao Yuan was not dumb; he too had realized there was a trick hidden within the space merchants' message, so he gave the person in charge the go-ahead. After that, he turned to the two of them to ask, "Can you please explain to us why you stopped us from reporting the technologies we have? It is obvious that with the things we gave so far, they are definitely not enough to afford any 5th revolution technology."

Ren Tao shrugged his shoulder and said not a word. Xiao Niao sighed and explained, "Because it's obvious that the space merchants are taking us for generous fools. How should I put this? Anyway, the value of a certain thing is proportional to its purpose and amount, right? For example, while we might treat gold as something valuable on Earth, it would be something equivalent to our dirt if we're trading with a planet made entirely of gold.

"It is the same thing here. There are many things we consider valuable that are not worth much to the space merchants. One

man's trash is another man's treasure. We have to be clear about this."

Xiao Niao turned towards the data on the screen and smirked condescendingly. "Therefore, conversely, things that we consider trash might be extremely valuable in space. This is incredibly possible. Since we have no clue of the space value for our resources, it enables the space merchants to swindle valuables out of our hands for extremely low prices. After all, these are experienced merchants we're dealing with, and all businessmen are liars."

Yao Yuan nodded. "You're right. This situation will mostly likely occur. Since both parties value the same things differently, it is possible that the things that are trash for us are extremely valuable to the other party. I think I get what you mean; we're essentially bargaining. If the lists we've sent have something valuable, the space merchants will stop us from leaving this trade because it is a trade in their favor since they have the information on the real space value of these items, while we don't. But how can you be sure there is something they want among the lists we've given? You should know this trade is a once in a lifetime opportunity..."

Before Xiao Niao and Ren Tao could answer, the reply from the space merchants arrived.

"...We're always willing to help out new space civilizations. Even though you're lacking in materials... no matter, we still hope to continue this trade, but we ask that you add something to balance out the trade. The best would be your civilization's main life form, or cosmic adaptors..."

Chapter 232: Negotiation

The space merchants' reply made both Ren Tao and Xiao Niao smirk. Even Yao Yuan realized that the merchants must have cheated during their previous conversation. There must be something valuable in the list mankind had provided that was given a low value. This latest response was probably the only honest thing the space merchants had said.

However, this knowledge calmed Yao Yuan. Profit is profit, no matter whether it was for primitive or advanced civilizations, in space or on Earth, profit was a yardstick that was clear and universal.

Trade between two parties was possible only because there was profit involved. Now that the space merchants had shown [interest in some of the minerals available on the Hope](#), the next course of action would be to find out what it was, to identify the leverage so to speak.

Yao Yuan turned to Ren Tao and Xiao Niao and asked, "Fine, but now you two should tell me from where did you see all of this? How did you find out that the space merchants are trying to swindle a deal out of us?"

This time it was Xiao Niao's turn to not respond. He stared directly at Ren Tao and snickered. Ren Tao shrugged, scratched his chin, and said, "It's fairly simple. Look at the value they've given to our list and you'll see it."

Yao Yuan initiated his Thinker power and analyzed the space merchants' value list. He had troubles spotting any anomalies in it, so he asked, "Just what did the two of you see? My Thinker ability is not as good as yours, so I can't see it... What is it? Just tell me."

Ren Tao gave a helpless expression that said "I'm too lazy," but he still walked to Yao Yuan's side and explained, "Look at the values closely. The values are suspiciously proportional to the amount of the items we have in stock. For example, we have the highest amount of iron ingots in storage, so it was valued at the lowest. Conversely, our store is platinum is the least and the value was the highest.

"It is the same with the radioactive minerals. Other than the few exceptions, the radioactive ores we mined from the new planet are highly out of proportion to the value offered. For example, these associated minerals. I remember clearly that we're only left with about 200 kilograms after distillation to clear away the impurities. However, when compared to its main minerals, the value is suspiciously low. This raised a red flag in my mind. How come every other mineral was valued according to the amount we have but these few were not?"

Ren Tao shrugged before continuing, "Next would be the DNA prints. The value given was simply too high, way higher than our expectations. Even though every planet and civilization has their own range of unique life form DNAs, the value is still too high. There is only one reason why the value is so high, and that is to cover up the fact that they pulled the price drastically low for other incredibly important items on the list. Giving these common DNA prints high values would balance out the bitter taste in our mouths from the low price of the minerals earlier."

Realization dawned for Yao Yuan. His Thinker power had kicked in halfway through Ren Tao's explanation. He said immediately, "Of course, you're right! It is really true that all businessmen are liars... But thankfully, at least they still have no idea that we've seen through their ploy and that they have unwittingly let out the fact that we're in possession of some extremely valuable minerals. Now that leverage is our side, we're definitely going to squeeze this bunch of wily merchants dry."

However, Yao Yuan still needed to be political in his words. After all, this was not a group of human merchants but a merchant conglomerate with technology slighter greater than mankind's. There was no point in getting into a hostile confrontation because of a few words.

"Tell them that we're really lacking in resources so the trade has to be canceled. Thank them for their offer."

Yao Yuan's heart started palpitating after he said those words. However, he had faith in Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, and his own assessment. Currently, mankind was like people groping in the dark. They needed information and technology, so Yao Yuan had to risk it.

The response came quickly from the spacecraft. "We are always willing to help new space civilizations. We are willing to trade a piece of 5th revolution technology for all the resources you have. Remember that the space merchant conglomerate will buy and sell anything."

The risk paid off. There was cheering in the meeting room. At the very least, humanity would gain access to a new 5th revolution technology, perhaps the warp drive technology. After all, this new technology could be the catalyst mankind needed to kick start another technological renaissance. It was entirely possible that mankind could officially enter the 5th revolution in the next decade with the help of the one 5th revolution technology.

However, there were still many things that mankind needed, and the biggest issue was that Yao Yuan had no idea how much value the Hope was actually sitting on. Therefore, they couldn't just come out and agree with the proffered trade. After all, bargaining was a part of trade. Of course, this didn't require Yao Yuan's input anymore. The Hope was home to a society of experts, and there were plenty that were familiar with business and business logic. This was their wheelhouse.

In actuality, this group of people got the shortest end of the stick when they joined the Hope. They were not familiar with scientific knowledge or handy with their hands. Their business minds were practically useless on the Hope, so the best they could do with their talent was open a hawker stall... It was truly a waste of their talent.

However, they finally found the chance to prove their worth. The top 10 businessmen and women according to their resumes on the Hope were summoned to the meeting room. They were tasked with handling the trade with the space merchants.

Initially, Yao Yuan and the gang still stayed in the room to be part of the conversation; however, after a while, they realized that they were the outsiders. Business slangs were flying all over the

room, and they had no idea how to add to the conversations. They resigned to standing still and listening. However, as time passed, some of them started yawning.

Spotting this situation, Yao Yuan separated the business people into groups and had guards watching over them in rotation so that people could go and get the rest they needed.

While Yao Yuan was resting, Guang Zhen took his place. However, he had a hard time sleeping; the smallest motion would shake him awake. Thankfully, nothing disastrous had happened. The negotiations had entered its third day.

Currently, it was the group of human experts that held the upper hand. The initial offer of one piece of 5th revolution technology was changed to one piece of 5th revolution technology and some space information. Furthermore, according to the negotiators, this was just the beginning. With how the negotiation was going, it was entirely possible that mankind would be able to get everything they wanted from the space merchants.

Was the radioactive mineral the Hope had really that important to the space merchants?

The answer the experts gave to this question was curious. They felt that it was not that the minerals were valuable but the merchants were too naïve. Simply put, the merchants appeared to have no experience in business speech and practically no knowledge about trade. They were like hawkers, barely qualified to be called merchants. That was why they kept losing their ground in the negotiations.

This answer befuddled many people's minds. Only Ren Tao gave a shocked expression, but the change in his expression was so quick that no one noticed it.

In the end, the negotiations lasted for seven days. The final trade was three pieces of 5th revolution technologies and all the information the merchants had on the cosmos. The space merchants finally seemed to have realized that something had gone wrong. They started rejecting mankind's requests for negotiation. In fact, they started to become more agitated than mankind. They didn't state that they wish to end the trade, but the spacecraft kept going back and forth to and from their main ship, obviously in deep discussion about something.

On the eighth day, the space merchants finally came to a decision. They invited mankind's leader to their main ship to cement the trade negotiation, and at the same time, they would send out a representative unit of less than ten people onto the Hope to do the same. The result of these two face-to-face negotiations would dictate the trade's success or loss.

After a long discussion, Yao Yuan was taken out of the unit going to the merchants' main ship. Ying would be leading the unit which consisted of Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, 20 Black Star Troopers, and half of the business experts.

"This negotiation is extremely important. Ren Tao and Xiao Niao, this is mankind's first official contact with another space civilization. Whether it will end with happiness or tears all depends on you..."

Thus, the invitation was accepted...

No idea where this sudden leap in plot comes from. The author didn't mention anything about the space merchants eyeing the minerals on the Hope before this. But for the sake of plot, let's just assume that did happen.

Chapter 233: Invitation

Regarding the space merchants' invitation, there were again two camps. Those that supported it said that the invitation was just a formality to cement mankind's victory in the negotiations. Going through with it would nab mankind the space information and 5th revolution technologies.

Those who rejected it, although small in numbers, backed up their argument with Ren Tao's warning. The space merchants already knew about mankind's existence and this was a way to test their cosmic adaptability. The invitation was a trap in disguise.

After weighing both sides of the argument, Yao Yuan still decided to accept the invitation. After all, the contact had been initiated, so there was no reason for them to abandon it half-way. This opportunity was way too important for them, so the invitation had to be accepted.

The party accepting the invitation was separated into groups for them to learn the correct manners and ways when they dealt with the alien merchants. After all, this was to be mankind's first contact with a space civilization, being prepared didn't hurt.

While all this were happening, a European girl about 9 years old walked into the meeting room. The place was a hub of activity where people were bustling about with their work. For example, the programmers were adjusting and transmitting information and signals, the Black Star Troopers were checking their space armor, the business experts were discussing among themselves excitedly, and even Yao Yuan was relaying something to Ying.

The girl waltzed easily into the supposedly heavily guarded meeting room. She approached Ren Tao with a giant smile and said, "Big Brother, I have a present for you before you go on this journey." She then opened her palm.

In it was a baby Black Dragon. The exquisite creature was shining like white pearl. It was sleeping soundly, yawning occasionally.

The little girl's words pulled Ren Tao out of his reverie. He didn't ask for people to get her out but instead eyed the path she took. The guards were changing shifts, so no one was there to stop her entry. Furthermore, the rest of the room was so busy that no one managed to pay her any notice.

"I recognize you. You're Eva, right? The granddaughter of that famous scientist..." Ren Tao tried searching his mind for a name but it just wouldn't appear.

Eva smiled and didn't explain. She passed the baby dragon over to Ren Tao and said, "Remember to have him close to you, it will be something that is crucial to the success of this mission." Before Ren Tao could even reply, Eva swiveled around and left. When she reached the door, the new rotation of guards arrived and they escorted her out.

Ren Tao was temporarily dazed. His mind was racing. After several minutes, he started laughing to himself and dropped the baby dragon gingerly into his space armor.

The Black Dragon had assimilated to life beside human beings, and their babies were especially familiar with the smell of mankind. There were no reported attack cases so far. The baby dragon was warmed by the inner space of the space armor and it fell back to sleep.

At the same time, the scientists finally returned to the bio lab after their lunch break, and within the baby dragon incubator, the originally 6 baby dragons were now 5. However, since it was not feeding time, no one had noticed the disappearance yet.

Eva, who left the meeting room, suddenly pulled a piece of high density fiber glass shard from her pocket and tossed it away. Then she walked away whistling her favorite tune.

Back at the meeting room, everything was ready. The party took the transport shuttle to the Observer, which would later send them over to the alien spaceship.

When they neared the alien spaceship, a 30-meter-long mini-spaceship exited from the space merchants' mother ship. It headed towards the Hope, the first face-to-face contact was about to begin.

Almost everyone was gathered at the windows to witness this momentous moment. About 20 minutes later, the mini spaceship entered the Hope through one of its hangars. With Yao Yuan leading the way, a group of Defense Unit soldiers, Black Star Troopers, and governmental workers stood at the corridor outside of the hangar to welcome the merchants' arrival.

Finally, 10 aliens of varying types descended from the mini spaceship.

The aliens were also in spacesuits, but their materials, colors, and appearances were totally different from each other. The 10 aliens standing before mankind could roughly be categorized into 4 races. One of them had a head about half the size of their bodies. They had a large head atop of a miniscule body, only about 1.4 meters in height, the typical image of an alien mankind had in mind.

Another race was about 3.5 meters tall and wide. They looked physically impressive, like a gorilla, but with 4 arms instead of 2.

Another race... didn't fit Yao Yuan's impression of an alien. It looked more like a scorpion-like insectoid. Their body was extremely long, at least 7 to 8 meters, and protruding out of their spacesuit was about 10 small appendages. They could stand upright, but when they moved, they still crawled like an insect.

The last race was the most curious of all. They were only a line. Yes, a 2 meter-long-line. The head part was slightly bigger than the rest. Otherwise, it looked exactly like an inconspicuous snake.

When the 10 aliens entered the Hope, basically everyone was startled by their appearances. Other than the first 2 types, the rest were simply too far away from how humanity envisioned what aliens looked like.

Thankfully, Yao Yuan quickly grabbed hold of himself. He went forward to greet them. His words were passed to a translator via

his space armor, and the words were translated into a signal which was then sent to the aliens.

"We gladly welcome your visitation. It is with an intention to improve the overall relationship between space civilizations that..."

As Yao Yuan went through the speech that he had memorized, the alien with the largest brain interrupted him, "Let's go straight to the negotiation, and please let us check the stock that you're giving up for trade."

Even though Yao Yuan was already prepared, he was still shocked by the alien's straight-forwardness. Perhaps it was because they had crossed paths with too many space civilizations that they wished to skip the formalities and get to the chase. Furthermore, mankind was the party with the lower technology, so the difference in attitude was understandable.

If that was the case, Yao Yuan too didn't want to waste any more time with preamble. Escorted by the higher officials and business experts, 7 aliens were led to the meeting room, while 3 others followed another group of soldiers to the warehouse.

Everything appeared to be running smoothly...

On the other hand, Ying's group was led into the space merchants' spaceship.

Their first impression was not high-tech, futuristic, or anything like that, but dirty, deplorable, and chaotic!

Indeed, when they first stepped into the spaceship, the first thing that entered their eyes were repair patches and the electrical lines that were peeking out from the holes in the walls. Everything looked imperfect and lacking. In fact, the place looked more steampunk than futuristic.

It must be said that Ying's group was disappointed by this view. However, it might be that the future looks this way? Who could really tell?

Ying's group was led into a large hall, but the place didn't look like a meeting room but an interrogation chamber. There was an enclave in the middle where Ying's group was led to while the surrounding tiers of seats rose up towards the ceiling. Several thousand aliens were gathered in the room, and they were literally looking down on Ying's group. Almost instantly, the humans felt shamed.

Ying tried to calm everyone's feelings. He whispered, "Don't get too worked up. This may be how they treat their honorable guests. Let's just follow their rules for now."

Of course, his group wouldn't act simply out of line, but the offense they felt in their hearts was hard to ignore. In any case, the negotiations continued with them being treated like convicts...

Chapter 234: Codes

Because of the creator's particles, neither party knew about how the other party's negotiation was going. Therefore, the Observer and the merchant spacecraft had to keep going back and forth between the two main ships to inform their civilizations of the negotiation progress. This was a calming balm to the nervous mankind, allowing them to focus completely on the negotiation happening on the Hope.

In this period, human representatives had accompanied the few alien merchants to look at the actual products to ensure that mankind really did wish to trade these items and weren't swindling the merchants for naught.

Anyway, the negotiations lasted for more than a day. In fact, Ying's group had to take a break in the middle of it to return to the Observer to rest and to sleep. The negotiations had reached an impasse. The space merchants realized the trade was not in their favor, but mankind didn't have anything else available to be offered. Regardless, the negotiations had to go on, as there was no other choice.

At 2 PM of the second day, a manager in the homeostatic room found something weird in the statistics of the Hope's daily water usage. The spike in statistics wasn't anything instantly alarming. In fact, it just looked like a stray line of code.

The manager was ready to shrug it off, but the more he thought about it, the more uneasy he felt. Every program on the Hope was directly connected to the Hope's central mainframe. In other

words, if there was anything wrong with the programs, it would mean that there was something wrong with the central mainframe. This was not a joking matter, but if it was serious, it could affect the Hope's life support system, and that was related to the lives of tens of thousands of people!

Therefore, he didn't dare to be careless and repeated the checking done on the systems. However, the code had disappeared. The manager had a bad feeling about this. This might've been a glitch in the system, but he couldn't just ignore it. After all, his life might hang in the balance if anything bad were to happen.

The manager thus reported this incident to his superior. They treated it with due diligence. Members from the Workshop were sent to check out the anomaly. In the end, they did discover the weird code. It was an encrypted code, the encryption being a quantum lock that they had not seen before.

They felt that this was something more than what they could handle, so the manager's superior passed it on to his superior. The incident slowly climbed up the bureaucratic ladder until it finally reached Yao Yuan's ears. He wasted no time and formed an expert tech group to conduct an all-rounded checking and diagnostics.

The report arrived very soon. The code was similar to the alien merchant's signal, because they used the same quantum lock. Of course, the content most likely was different, but it was certain that this mysterious code had come from the space merchants as well.

This was a highly suspicious situation. Could it be that the

merchants had discovered that their ploy was trounced by Ren Tao and Xiao Niao and they had sent out these stray codes as a disturbance?

This was the most logical conclusion. Therefore, Yao Yuan took the report and headed to the meeting room where the negotiations were still going on. He was caught up in his own thoughts, so he wasn't paying attention to his surroundings. When he neared the meeting room, his feet suddenly slipped, and he flailed in mid-air before landing on the floor with an embarrassing fall.

The fall scratched his forehead, causing it to bleed. Yao Yuan searched the floor for the culprit and found a glass pebble, but why would he find one there? This corridor was close to the Hope's bridge, so under normal circumstances, normal civilians and children wouldn't be allowed near. Furthermore, cleaning was done daily, so why was there a glass pebble there?

As Yao Yuan struggled to stand up, a large shadow passed him. It was one of the space merchants, the large, four-armed gorilla. The 3-meter-tall creature lowered his head to glance at Yao Yuan. Yao Yuan couldn't tell what the other party's expression was because the gorilla was wearing a space suit, but for some reason, Yao Yuan knew it was condescension...

When Yao Yuan straightened himself, the gorilla had already left. Yao Yuan saw something in the gorilla's condescending behavior, so he rushed towards the surveillance room. The people there were still trying to unlock the quantum lock.

Yao Yuan didn't waste time on greetings but ordered them to

speed up the decryption process. He needed to know what was the purpose and meaning behind the codes. There was a bad omen rising up within him, and for some reason, he realized that the key to understanding everything was to solve this quantum lock!

In the next few hours, the process for the tech team slowed down considerably, so much so that he had to take Zhang Heng off the Observers' unit to work on the decoding. After all, he was the go-to expert for anything computer on the Hope. Plus, encryption was his specialty.

However, this quantum lock proved too difficult for him to handle as well. Unlike other coding locks, this quantum lock was prone to changing and adapting to the hacking. Even with the central mainframe's aid, it was an uphill battle dealing with this lock. The biggest issue was that if the lock wasn't hacked in one go, it would reset itself.

Faced with little to no progress, Zhang Heng proposed another method: abandon the force hacking and instead use the junkyard signal issued by the space merchants earlier as a cipher to understand the codes via compare and contrast. However, this method would require a ton of repetition; even with the whole team working on it, it would take almost 3 hours to complete.

If that was the case, Yao Yuan stopped rushing them. He stood to the side and waited patiently; however, he was suddenly contacted by the business negotiators.

"Captain, these alien merchants' tones suddenly became much more aggressive. They are complaining that the negotiation have

been going on for far too long, accusing us of not showing them any sincerity. They asserted that they will only trade one thing for the 5th revolution technology. It is a take it or leave it kind of situation."

Yao Yuan knew instantly that something had gone wrong, but he still hadn't figured out what. There was something clawing at his mind, but at that moment, he asked in a hurry, "Well, what is it that they want?"

"Cosmic adaptors... The Homo Evolutis!"

The sentence made Yao Yuan's skin rise with goose bumps. It was the thing him, Ren Tao, and Xiao Niao were worried about, that the space merchants had a technology that could detect the presence of Homo Evolutis. This was the scariest situation. If this was true, there was no way these negotiations would end in peace.

The urgency of the situation pulled Yao Yuan out of the surveillance room. He rushed to the meeting room, and when he entered, he saw the business experts in the middle of a heated argument with the 10 space merchants. When they saw Yao Yuan, they immediately relayed all the information to him. The alien merchants had lost their patience and demanded to purchase the human cosmic adaptors. They demanded to have at least half of the Homo Evolutis to be up for trade or the negotiation was off. They had gotten so aggressive in their language that their tones had become nothing more than condescension and insults.

As soon as Yao Yuan switched on his language translator, a stream of insults and scolding came into his ears. A fury rose

within him immediately, but he suppressed it with force and told the merchants, "I'm sorry, but unlike the space merchants conglomerate, humanity only has one main life form, so we will not have our own up for trade..."

The giant brain alien retorted, "Don't be so stupid. In space, survival is the most important. We will provide you the best technology from Level 3 and 4 civilizations, and in return you only need to hand over half of your cosmic adaptors. This is a steal. As the leader of your civilization, how can you be so blind? Furthermore, the worms that your species are, shouldn't you be more courteous when you're facing a species obviously superior to you?"

Yao Yuan's fury flared up even more, but he didn't react rashly. After all, this was a communication between two civilizations. He suppressed his rage and replied, "We have many other things we're willing to trade: the minerals, DNA prints, everything you see in the warehouse can be traded, but our people are definitely not for sale..."

The big brain alien suddenly started issuing a series of calls that sounded like a duck's quacking. The other merchants gave out their own weird calls as well. The leading big brain alien said, "But what we want now are the cosmic adaptors, nothing else."

"Do you want me repeat myself? Our cosmic adapters are... not for sale!"

Yao Yuan had already narrowed his eyes. It was definitely not the look of kindness. Just as he finished, his communicator rang. The

urgent voice of the person came through. "Captain! The recent update from the surveillance room is that the code doesn't have the same frequency as the rest of the space merchants' signal. It matches...

"The frequency from Old Earth! They've met the other group of humans that escaped from Earth!"

At that moment, all of the lights on the Hope blinked out of power, but they returned almost instantly. However, after that little incident, the people on the Hope realized that they had lost control of the central mainframe!

The Hope was being taken over by the central mainframe!

Chapter 235: Start!

At this moment, Ying's group was still in harsh negotiations with the space merchants on the merchants' ship. Not only were they being treated like convicts, the language and tone employed by the merchants got increasingly condescending. Under these circumstances, Ying's expression became severe. Ebon, Liu Bai, and Wa Luo, as the Black Star Unit's members, were combat veterans, so they knew things were going south. Stealthily, they moved closer to Ying, on high alert.

Ying whispered to them, "Sadly, Zhang Heng has been sent back to the Hope. We could've had him read the situation for us. These aliens don't seem too friendly to me."

Ebon scoffed, "Let them try. I've noticed their weapons; even though they look different from ours, they're still Gaussian weapons. I didn't see any plasma weapons. Do they think we Black Star Troopers are paper tigers? We've killed millions of zerg aliens; I don't believe we can't handle this room of merchants."

Ying waved his hand, signaling Ebon to stop talking. He observed the faces around them closely... Even though he was unfamiliar with alien facial features, he could tell that the aliens were looking down on them.

Suddenly, the hall quieted down. Even though Ying had no clue what had happened, he knew it couldn't be something good. In the next second, a laser fence appeared around the lowered platform they were in, effectively trapping them within.

A few seconds ago, far away from the space merchants' mother ship, the Hope lost its light. Even though the power returned in a matter of seconds, the space merchants' ship opened its hangar and about 10 giant spacecrafts and more than a thousand smaller combat crafts surged towards the Hope.

A few seconds after the laser fence trapped Ying's group, a series of tentacle arms appeared from underneath the ground. The mechanical arms were sturdy and fast. They bound Ying's group in only a few minutes. Even Ebon couldn't react fast enough to escape from the arms.

The arms were made from some incredibly powerful metals. Even with the space armors' aid, they had difficulties tearing off the bindings. Furthermore, the arms went for human joints like elbows and wrists, making it extremely difficult to exert force.

After that, smaller arms appeared. They started working on the business experts and accompanying workers' normal spacesuits. Very soon, the small arms peeled the spacesuits off the people's bodies. It was unknown what the atmosphere inside the spaceship was like, but after their spacesuits were removed, the few people groaned, gasping for air before fainting completely.

The smaller arms didn't stop. They turned towards the others, the remaining Black Star Troopers. Their first target was Ren Tao.

Ren Tao gave a knowing smile as if the truth had suddenly dawned for him. He stopped struggling and told Ying and the rest behind him with a smile, "I suspect that the air in the spaceship will make human beings faint. No clue whether prolonged

exposure will be fatal or not, but to be safe, please help me get into my space armor after I've fainted. If not, I'll come back to haunt all of you."

Ebon roared back at him, "Are you kidding me? Can't you see were immobile too?"

"No." Ren Tao smirked. "We'll be free in just a minute."

As he said this, the smaller arms started working on his space armor. They took only few minutes to pull Ren Tao out of his space armor. At that moment, Ren Tao stuck his bound hands into his shirt and a snow-white Black Dragon baby appeared in his arms. He threw the baby dragon at the mess of arms without hesitation and yelled, "Sleepyhead, it's time to wake up and slash through those arms!"

The baby dragon was woken up due to being tossed roughly to the floor. The moment he woke up, he started chirping in complaint. However, he knew that something was wrong as soon as he opened his small eyes. He sucked in a few deep breaths, but his small nostrils kept twitching. Almost instantly, his body tensed. Like an angry kitten, he hissed threateningly at the aliens beyond the laser fence.

Ren Tao finally collapsed, grasping his throat. The baby dragon was actually very intelligent. He had been feeding on the new planet's unique, legged fish, so his IQ was higher than monkeys' and orangutans'. His intelligence was on par with a seven-year-old human child. He cleverly avoided going near the laser fence and focused his aggression on the metallic arms instead. He was so

small and fast that the arms were unable to keep up with him.

Black Dragon...

It was truly befitting of its super species name!

Ever since leaving the new planet, the research on the Black Dragons' evolutionary system hadn't stopped even though progress was glacially slow. The main issue was the Black Dragons' unique genetic quality, namely its genetic enhancement quality. It was hard for man to envision why a peaceful environment like the new planet would breed a super species like the black dragons. It undermined the human understanding of evolution.

Even at this moment, the black dragon showcased its incongruities to mankind's evolutionary knowledge.

Even though it was only a baby dragon, its teeth and jaw strength were strong enough to directly chomp through the metallic arms. Not only that, he was completely unaffected by the electricity that leaked out of the destroyed arms. He worked through the arms one by one until few of the Black Star Troopers were released from their bindings.

One of them was Ebon. With a mighty roar, he pulled out the sawblade on his waist and hacked at the remaining metallic arms. A series of metallic clangs later, all the Black Star Troopers were released. Ying yelled, "Ebon! Get 5 troopers and start cutting through the ground! If we can't go out, we're going down! Liu Bai, take another 5 and get the others back into their spacesuits and

space armor. The rest follow me and we'll make quick work of the remaining arms!

"Let's do this!"

Back on the Hope, many people were startled by the sudden albeit temporary loss of power. People were shocked and afraid because they were, after all, in space. Who knew what would happen next?

Eva's parents, who were resting and cooking, stopped what they were working on when the lights in their house flashed. They started fretting when Eva walked out of her bedroom sleepily, rubbing her eyes. "Mom, Dad, it's going to be fine. Everything will quiet down soon enough. By the way, please remind the aunty that comes with the needles to do it with less force and more accuracy after I fall asleep. Her first shot will miss the artery and the second shot will miss from her shaking hands."

Eva yawned and returned to her bedroom, leaving her surprised parents behind. She closed the door lightly and hopped onto her bed. Then she pulled her teddy bear into her arms, lied down, and slept snuggled against the bear.

After the temporary power outage, Yao Yuan instantly knew that something had gone awry. He yelled at the ten Black Star Troopers that were guarding the meeting room, "Detain them! There is something very suspicious about these space merchants! Detain them!"

However, the troopers didn't move. The space merchants started laughing in their own language while the troopers tried to speak above each other, saying, "Sorry, Captain, we can't move. The space armors are completely offline!"

With that, Yao Yuan knew that something was truly off. He turned to the Defense Unit soldiers and ordered, "Fire! Kill them all!"

The Defense Unit soldiers carried low power Gaussian rifles, the kind that wouldn't penetrate the spaceship's walls, so their power was not as strong as the originals'. The 20 soldiers heard Yao Yuan's orders and pointed their guns at the alien merchants. However, they were too late. The bullets bounced off the electromagnetic shields that appeared around the merchants. The gorilla alien leaped over the meeting table while other aliens rushed towards the soldiers. The only alien who remained seated was the big brain alien. He continued cackling in that strange laugh of his.

At that moment, a voice issued in Yao Yuan's communicator. "Captain! We've lost complete control of the Hope. All the systems were hacked. The merchants used a code similar to something from old Earth and have taken control over our central mainframe! Everything is down!"

The four-armed gorillas slammed into the Defense Unit soldiers. Their strength was so great that one fell swoop of their arm practically bent and cut a human soldier into two. Either that, or the soldier was sent flying into the wall and splattered in a mess of guts. With their incredible strength and speed, 3 alien gorillas took

7 seconds to decimate 20 Defense Unit soldiers!

Yao Yuan understood that the time for words was over. Suddenly, a series of footsteps appeared from outside the door. However, they sounded too mechanically uniform to Yao Yuan's ears. There was only one possibility. After the merchants had taken over the central mainframe, they used it to control the empty trooper space armors.

Yao Yuan leaped to one of the troopers' sides and pulled out the sawblade on his waist. Right at that moment, an alien gorilla charged towards him. Yao Yuan leaped backwards, and with a twirl of his wrist, the gorilla was split into two sections and fell to the floor. Yao Yuan's eyes were overcast with chilling vengeance.

"Don't think that we Homo Evolutis are completely useless without the space armors..."

"Killing the likes of you is as easy as pie!"

Chapter 236: Complete Infiltration!

The spacecraft and combat jets that the space merchants sent out during the temporary power outage finally reached the Hope. However, they didn't conduct any attack on the Hope's exterior. Instead, they flew closer to the hangar, and a platform extended out of the spacecraft and one unit after another of the space merchants' military swarmed into the Hope.

Back in the meeting room that was used to host the space merchants, Yao Yuan stood over the bodies of 10 alien merchants, his sawblade gunning and expression severe.

In the previous battle, 30 plus Defense Unit soldiers died and one Black Star Trooper was heavily damaged by the four-armed gorilla. He needed immediate medical attention.

Not only that, based on what Yao Yuan knew, all the Black Star Troopers' space armors were nullified. Other than that, all the devices and tools that had internal computer system were offline, this included the Prototype 003 Combat Jets and the Hope's internal defense system. Other than the Defense Unit's low-power Gaussian rifles, mankind was practically defenseless.

Under these circumstances, the space merchants had started their complete infiltration! There was no need for the use of surveillance to confirm this observation. One could look outside the Hope's window and see the alien troops that kept pouring out of the few large alien spacecraft and more than a thousand combat jets. It was undeniable that the infiltration had begun!

Yao Yuan's heart was filled with regret, but he knew that it was useless to focus on it. Rather than wallowing in regret, he should focus on handling the task at hand. He pulled himself together and ordered the remaining Defense Unit soldiers, "Get the troopers out of their space armors and start gathering the troops..."

Guang Zhen, who was beside him, asked seriously, "Are we going to set up a defense perimeter at the hangars?"

Yao Yuan shook his head. "No, we don't have enough firepower or manpower to put up any form of a fight. However, like the liquid metal civilization, these merchants want to capture us alive, so we still have a fighting chance... Ol' Wong, gather all the Defense Unit soldiers and have them go to the central mainframe and set up the defense barricade there. Grab any Black Star Troopers and Homo Evolutis you see on the way. Also, bring along all the Black Star Troopers' space armors."

Guang Zhen did a double-take. He asked Yao Yuan for confirmation, "Are you sure about this? Have you thought it through? How about... how about everyone else, the civilians and the families of the soldiers?"

Yao Yuan nodded in confirmation. "Of course I've thought it out. Don't you get it? The space merchants' targets are the Homo Evolutis, that is all they want! Therefore, with us gathered at the central mainframe, it will pull their troops towards it and away from the normal civilians. They will come for us first because if we decide to commit suicide, the loss will be unbearable for them. Get it now? We're the bait!

"Other than that, we must make sure we regain control of the central mainframe as soon as possible. We must, or today shall be the end of humanity!"

Guang Zhen nodded grimly. He stopped hesitating. After saluting Yao Yuan, he led a group of soldiers out of the meeting room while others helped the troopers get out of their armors. After that, they divided the space armors into smaller pieces and carried them to the central mainframe.

In such a pivotal situation where the survival of humanity hung on the line, Guang Zhen didn't dare to dally. He corralled all the lieutenants and sub-lieutenants and relayed to them Yao Yuan's orders and plan. He tasked them with the job of pacifying the emotions of their units. After that, Guang Zhen split the soldiers into three teams. One was to gather the straggling Homo Evolutis like Zhang Heng and Bo Li, another was to go to the weapons warehouse to move all the space armors to the central mainframe, and the last was to rush to the central mainframe and start setting up the defense barricade around it. This would be the Hope's last bulwark!

On the other hand, back on the space merchants' ship, Ying's group's space armors weren't affected. Perhaps the creator's particles had prevented the Hope's central mainframe from reaching their space armors. All of the twenty space troopers had helped everyone get back into their spacesuits and they had dropped down to the lower ground through the hole that Ebon had sawed through.

This level below the condemnation hall was a level that was

equally broken and grimy. However, this level's ceiling was much lower than the one they were previously in. At many places, the troopers had to bend down to get through. After they went deeper in, they found some snake-like life forms scurrying away to save their lives. The entire ship had sounded a piercing alarm. It was barely a minute from when Ying's group jump down the hole but several quarantine walls had dropped down attempting to block their way.

Did the aliens really think the walls were going to stop the troopers? The sawblade was not for show. As long as it was not a pure laser fence, cutting through the walls was like cutting through cheese!

The walls did have some thickness to them, but before the sawblade, they were nothing. They couldn't stop the killing machines the Black Star Troopers were!

A unit made up purely of Homo Evolutis coupled with the armor that was meant to promote their reaction time and tenacity to the maximum with a sawblade that was unbeatable in close-quarters combat and Gaussian rifles that had long-distance piercing capability? Yes, they were killing machines!

After tearing through multiple walls, Ying's group finally crossed paths with the space merchants' first military unit!

One thing was for sure, the space merchants' weapons were definitely better than mankind's.

The merchants still employed Gaussian weaponry because no plasma weapons were in sight other than the earlier laser fence. Even so, it was observable that the alien's equipment was indeed better than what the troopers wielded.

The alien soldiers were of different shapes and sizes, but their weapons were standardized. There was a curious-looking triangular Gaussian gun. Before firing, the front of this weapon would disintegrate into three arrows, acting as a scope, aiming at the Space Troopers. The accuracy was much better than mankind's Gaussian rifles, but of course not better than Ying's.

Secondly, whenever the bullets rebounded and hit the walls, ceilings, or floors, a thin layer of electromagnetic shield would appear, blocking the bullets from piercing through and harming the body of the spaceship.

Other than these standardized weapons, the alien merchants had a commander-like character in each unit. Normally, this role was held by an alien who had a ginormous head and small body. They didn't have any Gaussian weaponry on them, but beside their heads were three floating plate-like objects. These circular plates kept on spinning, and after a short period of charging, they would tear through their target with alarming speed. Not even the electromagnetic shield could block them. However, after they hit their targets or went beyond their targets, they would return automatically to the brain alien's side. Furthermore, these spinning plates would automatically block the bullets that came at the alien.

This was an extremely powerful weapon that had taken down

two space troopers. Since electromagnetic shields and covers were useless before this weapon, one could only avoid them with one's instinct. Two Survivors died from being ambushed by the plates.

However...

This did not stop the troopers!

On paper it might sound amazing, but the 20... 18 space troopers after their first encounter with the military unit of about 500 people practically ran over the resistance like a ballast roller. The spinning plates required charging time and could be avoided if one read the malice projection of the brain alien well beforehand. Even if they blocked the Gaussian bullet, they could do nothing if the troopers rushed in for close quarters combat!

Of course, there were alien species that were good at close quarters combat too. One was the four-armed gorillas that had on giant armor that looked similar to Black Star Troopers' space armor, and the other was the insectoid scorpion-like aliens. With their many appendages, they were fast and furious.

However, in comparison, even the Survivors with the aid of the space armors could reach upwards of 150 meters reaction time per second. That was a concept that was by itself hard to encapsulate!

None of the alien species could match their speed! Occasionally, the gorilla aliens would leap forward to attack the troopers with giant clubs that shimmered with electrical pulses, claws, knives, or bats, but none of their attacks would land on the troopers. Instead,

many of them would fall to the floor in two or in many pieces!

The victory was clearly one-sided!

However, Ying had no idea where they were or where the space merchants' crucial spot was. He could only power on deeper into the spaceship. After all, the merchants had fired the first bullet, so there was no reason for them to show any kindness. They cut down any alien that they came into. The soldiers alone, Ying's group tore through 3 platoons of them. That equaled to at least 2,000 soldiers, and they hacked down about ten times of that for other non-combative aliens.

This bloodlust was a mixture of the betrayal and their worry for their families and friends back on the Hope.

Both parties started moving. On one hand, about ten thousand alien space merchants had infiltrated The Hope, while on the other, 18 Black Star Troopers combined with a group of light-headed business experts and normal civilians headed deeper into the inner chasms of the space merchants' spaceship...

The infiltrations had officially started!

Chapter 237: One Step Back is Hell!

The Defense Unit's progress wasn't going smoothly. When they were dismantling and transferring (the space armors were too heavy to carry in one piece, so they had to be dismantled first), they unfortunately ran into the invading space merchants.

Instead of using Gaussian weaponry, the space merchants were equipped with unique-looking electronic pulse rifles. They appeared to be more high-tech than Gaussian weapons but still not yet in the stage of actual plasma weaponry.

Instead of bullets, the weapons shot out electronic currents, and there were basically no misses. The most important feature of this weapon was that it wasn't affected by electromagnetic shields. However, the damage of the currents was significantly weaker than Gaussian weapons. For example, a Defense Unit soldier in space armor required at least 7 shots before the gun would take effect, and even then, the damage was only strong enough to paralyze someone.

The space merchants' aim wasn't to kill but to capture. They intended to capture all the human beings alive. Of course, their main targets were the Homo Evolutis.

The Defense Unit soldiers hadn't faced a weapon like this before, so almost 300 soldiers were incapacitated when the infiltration started. The element of surprise could play a huge role in deciding the sway of the battle. While the rest tried to put up a fight, they were slowly retreating, pushed back by the space merchants. The biggest frustration was their low power Gaussian rifles; their

power was equivalent to normal firearms. Could such a weapon pierce through the space merchants' electromagnetic shield? Impossible!

It was a one-sided combat situation favoring the space merchants. Even though it was hard to tell whether there was any death on the humans' side, it was certain that the space merchants had suffered zero deaths. Furthermore, the space merchants were reinforced by the four-armed space gorillas. The soldiers' bullets basically bounced off their armors without even creating a dent.

When the Defense Unit retreated to the central mainframe area, more than 500 soldiers were lost and they only had 30 to 40 space armors with them. Of course, one of them was the red space armor tailored for Yao Yuan.

The other unit led by Guang Zhen had a better experience. He went to the basement levels to round up the patrolling soldiers and Homo Evolutis that were at their residences. The damage suffered wasn't so heavy because the basement levels were further away from the hangars. However, about 200 soldiers fell in the mission to protect important personnel like Bo Li. Then Guang Zhen led everyone back to the central mainframe, and in the end, there were only about one thousand soldiers left when they gathered at the central mainframe!

The central mainframe covered only a small area. It was a highly defensible location because it had only one entrance, creating a bottleneck situation. However, it still didn't bode well for humanity because the difference in quality of weaponry was too big. One party had something akin to plastic guns, while the other

had something that was indefensible. The paralysis incurred by the electric pulse guns was so strong that once hit, it would take at least a day for its victim to regain consciousness.

On paper, it might need several shots to fully incapacitate a person, but considering the speed of electrical currents, the few shots only took 2 seconds in total.

On the other hand, it required the focus fire of about 10 soldiers on the same target to create a ripple on the space merchant's electromagnetic shield to temporarily force them back. The bottleneck situation limited not only the space merchants' military but also the Defense Unit's. They could set up a half circle perimeter inside the room instead of the corridor. The formation would be more suitable for a more focused line of fire, but they couldn't do so because behind them was the central mainframe!

The moment the central mainframe was damaged, be it only a single dent, it would create irreparable damage to such a delicate piece of machinery. The central mainframe was the heart of the ship; even a tiny bit of damage to it could spell doom to the entirety of human civilization!

One step back was hell!

Therefore, everyone knew that they couldn't retreat even another step. A heavy silence permeated the barricade. It was not fear but resoluteness. The moment the soldiers at the front fell, the ones behind quickly stepped forth to take their places. They took up their weapons and fought alongside their comrades until it was their turn to fall. This was repeated continuously.

There were no orders from their superiors, but everyone knew what they were supposed to do. The soldiers kept stepping forward to block the entrance to the central mainframe. There was no exception.

To quote what had been said before...

One step back was hell!

Behind them, a few groups of ladies were weeping silently, but most of them silently watched this situation unfold. It was not a stunned silence but a weighty silence. At the last moment, after the soldiers had fallen, the Homo Evolutis and space troopers who were out of their armors stepped up to the plate.

Right then, Xi Kong, who was in the crowd, wiped away her tears and started singing. Her voice was barely above a whisper, but it cut through the commotion created by the bullets and electrical pulses, the silence that pervaded the air into everyone's hearts and souls. The civilians who were avoiding capture by the space merchants, the soldiers that were fighting, and those that had been captured by the space merchants all heard her voice.

The Defense Unit soldiers that were captured was the first group to respond to Xi Kong's singing. They stopped caring about their personal safety. The song they heard spoke of the biggest crisis that had faced humanity yet, the type that one step back would spell extinction for humanity. They heard the final struggle for humanity, the hail-mary effort that was willing to put oneself on

the line for the sake of humanity; all these thoughts rang in their heads. Even though their weapons were confiscated, they bounced back up to tackle the space merchants that guarded over them...

Next were the civilians. They stopped pushing and crashing into each other like headless chickens. They continued their effort to escape capture, but there was no longer that sense of being lost. Some of the elderly stopped moving completely. They fixed their clothes and waited for the electric pulse to knock them out...

Control of mankind's three other spaceships, the Defender and the Observers, were lost as well because they were within the the Hope's control range and not out of its creator's particle field, so all of the functions on the three ships had gone offline too.

The space merchants infiltrated these three ships as well. Of course, their main effort was to capture live humans. Even though the attack force wasn't as vehement as the one on the Hope, they too were losing against the space merchants.

When they heard Xi Kong's song, the people that remained on the three ships had a sudden thought that crossed their minds. They retreated to the emergency control center, and all of them did the same thing...

When mankind created the three spaceships, to prevent the possibility of losing control of these three ships during space war, a unique change in the design was introduced. There was no way for humanity to tell what kind of alien they would eventually come up against, and if it was the mother nest alien again, instead of being infected, death would seem to be the better choice.

Therefore, self-destruct devices were installed into the three ships. There were two ways to initiate them. One was through electrical signals, and another was through manual operation. The two methods were not limited by each other...

The workers on the three ships came to a unanimous decision without consulting with each other. Basking in the sound of Xi Kong's song, they pulled the self-destruct lever with grim yet determined expressions...

At that moment, three giant, bright, and circular halos burst out in space, consuming tens of alien spacecrafts and more than 300 alien battle jets that were close to the three ships. In the end, there was nothing but space dust...

Back on the Hope, when the three ships exploded, Yao Yuan raised his head suddenly. He hadn't actually witnessed anything, but there was a heavy feeling that pressed down on him, just like... in that very moment, more than a thousand human beings had left him with their conviction, the conviction that spoke of love and protection towards the human race!

Yao Yuan turned to ask Bo Li and Zhang Heng with a voice that had coarsened, "Still can't locate the reason why the central mainframe was taken control of?"

Zhang Heng wiped the sweat that was pouring down his forehead. "It's a type of code, a code that identifies and attacks human digital fingerprints, but something else within it is

changed. F*ck, what is up with this quantum lock!?"

Yao Yuan sighed before turning to Bo Li. "Bo Li, how come your robot prototype isn't being controlled?"

Bo Li was slightly taken aback before answering, "Because it was not created using human technology; it doesn't belong to the human digital system but the junkyard aliens'... Actually, there might be another way out of this."

Yao Yuan asked hurriedly, "What?"

"Destroy the central mainframe itself..."

Bo Li continued, in a serious tone, "Destroying the central mainframe means that we will lose all the life support and anti-gravity system, but it is the only way we can stop this virus thing. After that, we only need to..."

"Need to kill all these infiltrators before our lives run out and escape the creator's particle zone for the remaining members of the Workshop to repair the central mainframe. Is that right?"

Yao Yuan raised his head to look at the defense barricade. The rotation was still going on. but the numbers... was slowly decreasing.

"Black Star Troopers, equip your space armors! The rest that don't have space armors, follow behind us as we rush to the space

combat jet hangars!

"Destroy the central mainframe! Since the space merchants have us cornered, we shall fight back with the full force of our lives...

"And claim all of theirs!"

Chapter 238: Release the Black Dragons!

Destroying the central mainframe was easier said than done.

The central mainframe was a complicated and delicate high-tech product. It contained elements that mankind's current technology couldn't replicate. It even used some of the parts salvaged from the junkyard civilization. Therefore, any wrong step could prove to be irreparable damage.

Naturally, one couldn't just hack it using the sawblade; this difficult procedure required the careful hands of specialized experts to make sure that the damage done was contained and could later be easily fixed, or at least could be fixed within several minutes using mankind's technology.

The chore thus fell on Bo Li's shoulders. She was the only one there who could perform something like that. After she received Yao Yuan's permission, she started diagnosing and checking the central mainframe's internal system. Other than that, she also pulled information from it.

The information was from the Hope's surveillance system, like camera feed of important locations and public amenities from different floors. The Hope might've been under the control of the space merchants, but the cameras were still rolling.

From all the observations she had received thus far, Bo Li suspected that the Hope's central mainframe wasn't directly controlled by the space merchants but was hacked into by some

kind of computer program or virus that was unknown to mankind. After all, the Hope and the space merchants' spaceships were divided by a field of creator's particle, blocking all transmission of electrical signals.

Other than that, the Hope's central mainframe was a product of the 4th revolution, albeit one that was from the early 4th revolution. It was a type of supermagnetic computer. Based on her observations, the space merchants hadn't entered the 5th revolution, so they only had access to few of the products.

Therefore, it was impossible that the space merchants could use a laptop to gain complete control of a supercomputer like the central mainframe.

Hence, the biggest possibility was that the space merchants had used some kind of high tech computer program, such as the quantum lock, to disable the central mainframe.

Yao Yuan and the rest saw how the rest of the ship was surviving based on the pulled surveillance videos. Currently, a mass of space merchant military had entered the Hope. Other than the tens of thousands soldiers that had mankind cornered at the central mainframe, several thousands of the rest separated into units to swarm every corner of the Hope. They stunned all the humans that they ran into, and the large gorilla aliens would carry the unconscious human beings onto their spacecraft. So far, more than several thousand people had been kidnapped, and this number was still increasing. Similarly increasing was the number of the invading space merchants.

Guang Zhen was the one who held himself most together while they saw the videos. He suddenly pointed at one of the screens and yelled, "Yao Yuan! Here! Look!"

Yao Yuan's gaze followed Guang Zhen's finger and saw on screen more than ten Black Dragons anxiously pacing around a metallic wall. The wall had several deep dents on it, but it was observable that the Black Dragons didn't use their full force, because if they did, the wall wouldn't be standing, since mankind's technology wasn't advanced enough to create anything that could withstand their full force.

This was the Hope's biome at its uppermost level, the Black Dragons' habitat. Under normal circumstances, no one was allowed to disturb them, and the dragons exercised restraint. As long as they were given their daily feed, they would not exhibit their feral side. With training, they could even learn to not ruin the level's structural frame. In fact, at the moment they realized something was going wrong on the ship, due to their prolonged training, they still hesitated to break down the doors and rush downstairs.

Yao Yuan screamed excitedly, "That's right, the Black Dragons! They don't need to rely on any equipment, and the space merchants' electrical weapons will just bounce off their thick skin!"

Bo Li continued her work on the central mainframe and said, "Hate to break it to you, but currently everything that is controlled via the central mainframe is not working. Even though the Black Dragons might feel that something is wrong, they won't go out

without the door opening, so don't put too much hope on them, unless..."

"Unless what?"

The people around her asked in unison.

Bo Li checked the screen closer before replying, "The quarantine doors employ electromagnetic technology. Other than the few important entrances that entered lockdown during the power outage, the rest of the doors are completely opposite. They lost the ability to stay locked 100 percent; however, this doesn't mean that they are wide open, or else they wouldn't still be staying inside. In other words, we have to open those doors."

Yao Yuan immediately asked, "Is there any way you can do that? The black dragons will be a welcome addition to our troops. With their help, the space merchants will become less of a threat, and the space troopers can use this opening to get to the combat jets!"

Bo Li gave it some thought. "I can try to disable the central mainframe myself to cause another blackout and use my prototype robot to hack into the system for that particular area, I believe my robot is powerful enough to override a door switch. We can let the black dragons out that way. However, I have to say, I'm not a biologist, so I can't promise this won't go extremely wrong. The black dragons might attack indiscriminately under the current situation. If they attack mankind, they will be a bigger threat than the space merchants."

Yao Yuan shook his head. "We don't have time to worry about such things anymore. Furthermore, the black dragons have spent so much time with us that they should be familiar with our presence by now. Also, based on the current situation, the space merchants want to force us into extinction, so I'd say enraged Black Dragons are the least of our worries. We can calm them down after the fact. There's no time for us to hesitate, release the Black Dragons!"

Bo Li stopped talking and started working on the central mainframe. With Yao Yuan leading, the rest of the chosen Homo Evolutis put on the space armors. Yao Yuan had on his red space armor, and everyone waited with bated breath for the Hope's second power outage to arrive.

Everyone's focus was pulled into intense concentration from Bo Li's 'ready?' Their target destination was the Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets' hangar. They would climb into the jets and escaped from the creator's particle zone as soon as possible. After that, the war would officially begin!

And the defense of the Hope itself... would be handed over to the group of Black Dragons!

Bo Li had her robot incapacitate the central mainframe, and the Hope again submerged into a world of darkness.

At the same time, the Black Dragons on the sixth floor were getting increasingly frantic. However, the sudden darkness dazed them temporarily. When they came to, the door that blocked their way was slowly opening. Witnessing this, the Black Dragons ran

out with a brown dragon that was missing a leg leading the way, charged down the Hope with a speed that was way beyond human comprehension. The twenty Black Dragons seemed to melt into a bolt of dark-brown lightning!

The Black dragons were completely unaffected by the loss of gravity... like they were born into a zero-gravity environment!

The Hope's fifth and sixth floors were home to the Academy and Workshop, so there were a lot scientists and technicians stranded here. Among them were also Defense Unit soldiers that didn't run into Guang Zhen when he was making his rounds. These small groups of soldiers were either making a last stand against the space merchants or had surrendered and allowed themselves be shocked by the enemy. However, the key issue was that these two floors were the locations where a lot of radioactive minerals were kept!

Yang Sen was a veteran in the Defense Unit. Back on earth, he was part of the Chinese field unit. After he got on the Hope, he kept going strong in his training, so he was now a second-lieutenant. This year he was 38; if he was still on earth, he would be retiring, but with the Hope's genetic resonance technology, his army career was extended for another 30 to 40 years.

When the first blackout happened, he was part of the group that was tasked to look after the warehouse that stored such important assets. When the alien merchants attacked, he led his group to set up a fight. However, like every other unit, the difference in weapon technology was too hard to overcome. His group was forced to retreat into the warehouse, and use the geological advantage to put up a last stand. However... the fall was only a

matter of time, and it would happen in the next few minutes.

When the second outage occurred, Yang Sen's defense immediately fell apart. In less than 10 seconds, his group was rendered unconscious.

The moment the electricity surged through his body, shutting down his synapses, his heart was chilled. He understood that mankind would face its extinction unless there was a miracle...

Then...

A miracle did appear!

Before Yang Sen lost his consciousness, he saw a flash of red lightning out of the corner of his eyes. The four-armed gorilla standing before him that was in the middle of collecting the human beings that had crumpled to the floor suddenly folded his body into two beings shot by the red lighting...

And then slammed into the wall, making a messy splat!

Chapter 239: Start of the Real War!

The Black Dragon was a super species man couldn't understand.

According to mankind's understanding of evolutionary theory, the Black Dragons should be born on a planet that has gravitational force 20 times larger than Earth's, a barren landscape, a lack of food, low concentration of atmospheric oxygen, and was prone to frequent natural disaster.

It was the logical explanation behind why the Black Dragon was such a powerful super species. Survival of the fittest, natural selection, one of the most accepted theories within biology.

However, life would be impossible on such a planet. Gravity that is 20 times stronger than Earth's? That alone is enough to make the existence of such a planet dubious. With that strong of a gravitational force, how small would the planet have to be? Or perhaps the geological structure of the planet would be different? Under such circumstances, how could there even be a food chain when the plants that form the foundation of all food chains would have difficulty growing?

So why would the Black Dragons evolve to such a stage in the relatively peaceful new planet? What kind of event instigated such a drastic change in their evolutionary journey?

These were questions mankind's current scientific knowledge couldn't answer.

However, one thing was for sure: the Black Dragons were friendly to mankind's presence. Of course, it was not at a stage that was akin to man's relationship to dogs, but it was obvious that at least the Black Dragons were not averse to humanity's presence. However, it was another question whether the Black Dragons would put themselves on the line to fight for humanity's survival. I suppose we'll soon find out...

The moment Yang Sen lost his consciousness, a gorilla alien that was picking up an unconscious human beings was crushed into a mess of guts and meat by a Black Dragon. The dragons' speed was so fast that the space merchants were completely oblivious to their approach. Even though their spacesuits were equipped with the latest radar system they had, it was still too slow in comparison to the Black Dragons' speed.

Especially now, when the Hope's power system had gone completely offline and the ship had become a zero-gravity environment. While the space merchants' spacesuits were more advanced than mankind's, proven by the more numerous propulsion systems that decorated their spacesuits, providing a better balance and speed, the loss of gravity still greatly affected their mobility.

About 20 Black Dragons entered the space merchants' sight. The dragons maintained an unusual stance to move forward. Their tails and claws firmly pierced through the metallic layer. The paths that they travelled were left with a trail of small, deep holes. The deepest were the ones made by their tails. It appeared like they were flinging themselves forward using this kind of forward momentum. Of course, they used this method to change directions freely in space too. They approached the zero-gravity environment

like fish in the water. The zero-gravity did nothing to slow them down; in fact... they might have been even faster in this environment!

When the Black Dragons appeared, the hundreds of space merchants changed their formation. The gorilla aliens led the frontline, rushing at the dragons, their stun guns at the ready. The space merchants seemed intent on capturing the Black Dragons alive.

That was a mistake...

In the blink of an eye, all of the Black Dragons disappeared from their sight and appeared around the group of unconscious human beings. The leading Black Dragon, the one that was missing a leg, sniffed the human beings on the floor and gave out a booming roar. The rest of his pack joined in the war-drum-like growling.

In the next second, 20 adult Black Dragons launched headfirst into the space merchant troops, and about 10 of 30 space gorillas that stood in the front were knocked out of their formation. A few of them were torn into pieces by the Black Dragons. After a swipe of their claws, the aliens' spacesuits were shredded like paper. They were defenseless.

Of course, the space merchants kept shooting at the Black Dragons, but the dragons simply shrugged the stream of electricity off. An electrical voltage that was strong enough to knock a grown man out instantly was like a mosquito bite to the Black Dragons. They ignored the space merchants' pitiful attacks and tore freely through their ranks.

It was a massacre!

On the other hand, with the power outage, all of the space armors came back online. After ensuring this development, Yao Yuan stopped hesitating. He led the troopers who were back in their armors to the jet hangar.

There were only about 80 Defense Unit soldiers left at the central mainframe. Furthermore, most of these 80 people were already stunned by the electrical gun and were biting their lips to keep themselves from fainting. At this moment, they had reached their very limit. When Yao Yuan's unit charged out from within the central mainframe, several four-armed gorillas were charging in. They knocked the Defense Unit soldiers out of the way like nothing. One of them even picked up a soldier, aiming to throw him at the Hope's central mainframe!

A flash of red lightning zipped through, and from top to bottom, the space gorilla was split cleanly down the middle.

With the space armor's aid, Yao Yuan didn't even need to stop to collect himself. He immediately went after the next space gorilla. Furthermore, the space armor greatly reinforced his physical power, so he could even rival a Black Dragon in strength. It was a pure force that was even greater than a giant tank.

Yao Yuan slammed into a space gorilla and carried his momentum to ram into the other aliens in the area. The aliens piled onto one another, being carried by Yao Yuan's force until

eventually they were sent careening into the rest of the space merchants out in the corridor leading to the central mainframe.

"Leave no prisoners! Troopers, use your sawblades and hack your way through!" Yao Yuan yelled into his communicator, and moments later, the air was thick with blood...

More space combat jets continued to stream out of the space merchants' mother ship. There were around 1,500 circular combat jets as well as 100 plus several-hundred-meter-long circular spaceships. When the three human spaceships, the Observer and the Defenders, self-destructed, about 400 combat jets and 20 spaceships were caught in the explosion. Regardless, the space around the Hope was still teeming with these hostile spaceships.

The spaceships travelled to and from the Hope and the mothership ferrying the human cargo, but it stopped temporarily when the power went out for the second time on the Hope. Perhaps it was their dogmatism, but the leaders of these space merchant units resumed their capturing mission. The only change was that the spaceship started circling the Hope in high alert.

About 7 minutes later, a red combat jet shot out of the Hope with startling speed. Other combat jets followed it out one after another. There were about 100 combat jets in total. Their shapes and appearances were completely different from the space merchants' circular combat jets. Mankind's combat jets had adopted the sleek, streamlined design that was popularized by airplanes and aircrafts. Their appearance was quickly noted by the space merchants.

It took the space merchants about two seconds to realize that they needed to capture the red combat jet, but that was easier said than done.

The red combat jet was faster than any one of them. Before the space merchants could close in on it, it sped through their enclosing web, causing more than half of them to lose their offensive formation. However, the space merchants recuperated quickly. They decided to stop giving chase to the red combat jet and focused on the rest.

A bent pipe appeared underneath their spaceship and began to shoot a series of bright, glowing, fast-moving bullets. They looked like Gaussian weapons but had a firing mode completely different from other Gaussian weapons.

They miscalculated because unlike their own combat jets, which were piloted by normal soldiers, their enemies' combat jets were piloted by Homo Evolutis that made up the Black Star Troopers. Before the bullets even left the pipe, the Troopers had already felt their projection of malice and separated, evading the attack. Even though their speed was not as high as the red combat jet's, it was still far beyond the space merchants' speed. They escaped their trap easily and sped outside of the Hope's creator's particle range!

"Fire! Take down any enemy combat jet you can see! Leave the larger spaceships alone because they're carrying our civilians!"

Yao Yuan pulled on the control stick and the Red Lightning made a drastic U-turn in space. When he righted himself, all the space troopers had escaped the creator's particle zone. He yelled with

eyes burning with rage, "Since they've asked for war, we'll give them one! Charge! We'll crush them to a pulp!"

The Gaussian railgun and the mini cannon on Red Lightning started roaring as the combat jet charged towards one of the nearest circular combat jets...

Chapter 240: Crap

The Prototype 003 Space Combat Jet, from its initial design, was made to be paired with the Homo Evolutis.

In other words, while the combat jets were early 4th revolution products, they were not suitable for civilian use. The speed of the combat jets alone would make it look like the world was a blur if piloted by normal civilians. The possibility of accidents, like crashing into one another or just getting lost in space, was more than 90 percent if used by normal civilian.

Therefore, even with mass production, thus lowering the quality of the combat jets, the Prototype 003 was still meant to be piloted by Homo Evolutis. The only exception was the Red Lightning, which was three times faster than normal combat jets. The full capacity of that jet could only be brought out when it was piloted by Yao Yuan!

However, every lifeform underwent unique evolution according to its environment. For example, in the space merchants' troops, there were the physically impressive four-armed alien gorillas and the physically weak but mentally strong leader-type big-brained aliens. There was diversity. It was worth noting that the Black Dragons were a unique exception, where their bodies alone were enough to rival 3rd or 4th revolution products.

Therefore, it was entirely possible that while normal human beings couldn't handle the Prototype 003 Combat Jet, the children of the space merchants could pilot it just fine.

However, based on current observations, within the space merchants' many species, there was none that had an evolutionary path that focused on physical prowess. The alien gorilla aside, the rest of the space merchants were not unlike normal human beings, physical-condition-wise at least. Under this circumstance, the Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets piloted by the Black Star Troopers were much better and much more efficient than the space merchants' troops.

Of course, the space merchants' combat jets were certainly better than Prototype 003s in terms of technology. This was observable from design, metallurgy, weapon technology, and the likes.

But!

This difference wasn't drastic!

Basically, both parties were in the 4th revolution era. The biggest difference was probably in propulsion system, like one had a jet propulsion system while the other had an invisible jet propulsion system. The key ingredient that broke the tie was the quality of the pilots!

If that was the comparison, how big was the difference between a Homo Evolutis and the space merchants?

Bigger than one could possibly imagine...

First thing's first, the Homo Evolutis had the power to sense

projections of malice and thus could commit to evasion. Therefore, unless the space merchants had the technology to fire the moment the thought was formed, then it was practically impossible for the bullets to hit the Homo Evolutis. The other possibility was having the numbers advantage, like how it was when mankind combated the mother nest alien. There were so many enemies that evasion was pretty much a moot point.

When the Red Lightning piloted by Yao Yuan launched its first attack, the combat jets behind him followed. The Gaussian rail guns fired at an incredible speed using the same 3 jets per unit formation from before.

Just like that, a semi-transparent electromagnetic shield layer appeared around the circular combat jets that were attacked. Multiple Gaussian bullets slammed into the shields, creating ripples of electrical currents, but the shield held firm. It was indestructible, at least by Gaussian bullet standards.

This observation created a pall of disappointment over the Black Star Troopers. Even Yao Yuan started to frown. Thankfully, after a few more bursts of focus fire, one of the circular combat jets lost its electromagnetic shield and was riddled by bullet holes before exploding in space. That was a relief because even though the space merchants' technology was more advanced than mankind's, it wasn't so far advanced that mankind couldn't do anything about it.

Steeled by this small victory, the attack began in earnest. Even though mankind's Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets were negligible in terms of numbers when compared to the space

merchants' combat jets, Yao Yuan was surprised to realize that the merchants' combat capability was unbelievably bad.

Simply put, after Yao Yuan led the Black Star Troopers to start attacking, other than the first wave of defense that intended to catch them, the rest basically stood still where they were. They didn't move to surround the troopers or help their allies that were under attack.

Speaking of the combat jets that were under attack, their response was even weirder. They started to panic. In fact, 30 percent of them abandoned the battle and fled!

Yes, they didn't move into a more defensive position, nor did they counter-attack. They fled...?

They either fled back towards the larger cargo spaceship or their mother ship that was further away. Even their retreat was a mess, so much so that there were collisions with the units that were entering and returning to the battlefield. This sent the space merchant troops into absolute chaos.

This was a prime opportunity that could not be lost. Even without Yao Yuan's orders, the trained Black Star Troopers entered their offensive formation and took advantage of the chaos. They took down upwards of 400 circular combat jets!

The situation that unfolded before him surprised Yao Yuan greatly. Compared to the alien space army that he had in mind, the space merchant troops were like amateurs or normal civilians out

pillaging. The way they boarded the ship, their combat capability, formation, discipline, everything was a mess. He could never imagine an army fleeing in the middle of the war while they had the numbers advantage. How was that possible?

Yao Yuan thought back to the situation on the new planet when the Defense Unit soldiers and Black Star Troopers showed signs of deserting. They were all cut down by Guang Zhen. Even valuable assets like the troopers were cut down without a second thought, much less the Defense Unit soldiers.

After the war was over, Guang Zhen reported this situation to Yao Yuan. Yao Yuan knew about the importance of military discipline, so in the next few years, they did all they could to whip mankind's military into shape. No matter whether it was veterans or new recruits, they knew that the first rule in the military was that desertion during any warfare, be it with aliens or some unknown threats, would result in immediate execution, and the deserter's name would forever be recorded in history as human traitor, bringing long-lasting shame to his or her progeny and name!

Military discipline was something even a civilization new to the space game like humanity knew about. Then how come the space merchants, who had survived in space for god knows how long, had such a lousy military unit?

Could this all be a hoax?

The thought came into Yao Yuan's mind when he was piloting the Red Lightning, but he quickly dismissed it. Based on the

current situation, the space merchants had complete advantage over humanity. If they managed to take down the hundred plus Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets, victory was easily theirs. Mankind would have no way of coming back.

Then who were they cheating? Or what were they cheating about?

Regardless of their motives, there were things that needed to be done.

After Yao Yuan's first glorious, o-death victory, the space merchants seemed to have returned to their senses. The large amount of circular combat jets surrounding the Hope finally turned their target to the Prototype 003s. Minus those that had fled the battlefield, there were still about 900 circular combat jets and numerous large spaceships. They were all closing in on the group of Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets.

This was a rude wake-up call to humanity that they were still at a disadvantage.

Back in the Hope, Guang Zhen led 10 Survivors, the only combat force Yao Yuan could spare him, during the central mainframe's repair downtime towards the Hope's fifth and sixth floors, the location where the Black Dragons were supposed to be.

Very quickly, the group in space armors arrived at their destination. The sight that entered their eyes was a hell-scape. Bits and pieces of the space merchants covered the area, and there was

no sign of life anywhere!

In the middle of the blood puddle, the 20 grown Black Dragons were crazily tearing the bodies of the space merchants apart, flinging guts and body parts all over the place. The Black Dragons' bodies were covered with gunk of tendons and blood, making them exactly like messengers from hell. When Guang Zhen's group arrived, they were frozen on the spot by shock and fear... They were alarmed; even a tough guy like Guang Zhen was shocked.

However, what happened next made them completely relieved...

The group of Black Dragons straightened their bodies in alarm, but when they saw it was Guang Zhen and his crew, they did something amazing...

They stood up slightly, wagging their tails and nodding their heads, a sign of friendliness the Black Dragons normally displayed towards human beings.

Chapter 241: The Choice

When Yao Yuan led the Black Star Troopers to launch the comeback, Ying's group, which was in the space merchants' mother ship, found themselves in huge trouble...

They were lost.

It was uncanny, but they were certainly lost.

One of the biggest reasons was the enormous size of the spaceship.

Other than that, Ying's group wasn't equipped with cartographical tools like a compass. Then again, even if they did, it would be completely useless since they were in space. For civilizations with 4th revolution technology, they relied on coordination to pinpoint the direction and distance of far-away locations like destination planets, suns, or other celestial bodies.

For a close destination, one could rely on connection to the Hope's central mainframe, the Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets, or the computer program inside the space armors to calibrate the direction and distance of the location.

Naturally, Ying's space armor had this installed function, but for some reason, it was completely nullified while they were inside the space merchants' mother ship. To borrow an analogy, it was like how a compass started flitting all over the place when it was within a mountain range with its own magnetic field. The

computer calibration was in complete chaos.

Thankfully, the other functions of the space armor were perfectly functional. Therefore, Ying's group was practically unstoppable. After they dealt with the military unit, Ying's group started cutting down the alien civilians that came across. Eventually, their path was as empty as a ghost town, and the space merchants moved out of their way, allowing them to roam the spaceship freely.

Before long, Ying's group felt that something had gone terribly wrong.

First was the problem of navigation. The space armors had the ability to record the path that they had taken before, but gradually, the computers inside the space armors seemed to slowly malfunction. The directions stopped making sense and certain legends and parts of the map couldn't be showed. Not only that, the communication function of the space armors had gone offline as well. It was obvious that the space merchants had employed some sort of high-tech technology to undermine the information transmission and recording of the space armors.

The second sign was from Zhang Heng. He felt a sense of danger coming from all around the space merchants' ship pressing down on him. Probably the space merchants had realized the true threat of the Black Star Troopers, so they stopped dispatching light infantry and were preparing their siege engines. This was something that greatly worried Ying's group. The troopers had a distinct upper hand when facing off with light-armored units, but how about siege machines that had technological advantages?

Due to that reason alone, even though the group was completely lost, Ying decided to get the group to continue moving. Navigation fell squarely on Zhang Heng's shoulders. When they came to any forks in the road, they took the one where Zhang Heng felt least threatened. Of course, certain paths were blocked off on the spaceship, so after a discussion between Ying and Zhang Heng, they decided to ascend from the lower levels to the upper levels.

However, they needed to come up with another plan soon. A human being's physical capacity was limited, and the troopers weren't superheroes that could just blast their way out of their enemy's spaceship. As long as they remained trapped here, eventually they would fall into the space merchants' hands.

Furthermore, the battery storage of the space armors wouldn't allow them to continue this charade for more than several days. After the space armors died, mankind would be like a mouse trapped inside a maze. Capture was inevitable!

Therefore, during their escape, Ying kept turning to Ren Tao and Xiao Niao to ask for a solution.

Both tried their best to come up with a solution, but Ren Tao was definitely not in his best condition. He suggested they go back to the interrogation hall and from there cut their way through to the hangar. This ridiculous idea was immediately vetoed by Ying.

The security for the hall was probably sky-high, making it a place that was impossible breach with only about 10 combatants. Even if

they could, it was highly doubtful that the space merchants would just let them waltz onto the Observer and return to the Hope. The plan was crazy to say the least!

Ren Tao was too flustered by his worry for his sister, Chou Yue, who was on the Hope, to come up with a sound plan. The space merchants were ready to double-cross humanity from the very beginning, so they were most likely wreaking havoc on the Hope while they were scurrying through the space merchant's mother ship like rats.

Isolated from the rest, Ying's group started to envision the worst possible outcome... the Hope had fallen and the few of them were the last remaining members of the human race!

This was the conclusion drawn by Ren Tao after his analysis. It drew a heavy silence over the group; even Xiao Niao, who had been arguing with him, was in solemn silence.

Of course, they didn't want this to happen, but it had the highest possibility of happening. After all, the space merchants were using 4th revolution weapons. The fact that their technology level was higher than mankind's was undeniable. Lastly, the double-cross came as a surprise. The complete capture of the Hope was entirely possible.

A worse outcome was the space merchants had no need for human beings other than the ones trapped on their mother ship. Then, they could have used some kind of super weapon to evaporate the Hope... This was not that hard to imagine.

If that was the case, what was going to happen to the few of them?

No place to call home in this vast cosmos, no families and friends, no bond to a race, no future, no anything...

What was the point of living then?

"Let's just murder our way back!" Xiao Niao suddenly yelled.

Ying, who was running at the front of the team, shut him down immediately with an angry roar. "Have you gone crazy as well? Ren Tao is unable to think straight because of his woman. What about you? Your two gay friends?"

Xiao Niao fired back at him, "I've lost it for the sake of humanity, is that so wrong? Furthermore, I didn't say we're going back to surrender. Hear me out, it is certain that the computer systems in our space armors are being manipulated in some way, right?"

Ying calmed himself and replied, "That's probably right, but what about it?"

Xiao Niao responded, "This means that the space merchants don't want us to see the map of their mother ship. If I'm not mistaken, according to everything we've observed so far, this spaceship should still be relying on polymerized reactors as its fuel source, wouldn't you agree?"

Ying's interest was piqued. "Go on."

Xiao Niao continued, "We will launch an attack on the nearest carrier point to take control of it. Of course, this requires a little planning because a good strategy will be needed. This is your field of expertise, so I'll leave it to you. After we take down the point, we'll get into their siege machines to pull up the map of this ship. Our systems might be affected, but they wouldn't target their own computer system, right?"

Before Ying could reply, Liu Bai beside him retorted, "This plan is no good. We don't know how to read their language or, for that matter, operate their computers."

Ren Tao immediately responded with eyes red with anxiety, "No, it's possible! Not sure whether you guys have noticed this or not, but after I woke up from the ambush, I realized that the space merchants didn't put up a united front, or rather, of their different races, only the four-armed gorillas are battle hungry. The rest of them, especially the big-headed aliens, were definitely not fond of battle. There were signs of deserters. It's just that we killed them all, so they weren't given a chance to surrender."

This observation did surprise Ying, Liu Bai, and Ebon. Ebon immediately confirmed, "You're right. I've noticed that other than the more advanced weaponry and the alien gorilla's natural physical prowess, the space merchants' army is suspiciously weak. There was no strategy or discipline to their movement. I thought I was imagining it... Do you think it's because their main army was dispatched to take the Hope so the ones left behind were the back-

up units or local police force?"

Ying said coldly, "What's the point in dwelling on the dead... Xiao Niao and Ren Tao, stop circling around and lay your plan in the open. We have no time for word games."

Ren Tao answered, with an eagerness that was very uncharacteristic of him, "It's simple! Like Xiao Niao said, we take control of a small siege unit and then set up a contained trap. After we wait for the enemy to fall into our trap, we aim for the deserters and wait for them to surrender. We'll make them pull up the spaceship map and force them to translate for us. Of course, we need to inquire about the Hope's latest situation. That is the question that we're most interested in after all. After that...

"If the Hope is still intact, we will proceed to this ship's heart, maybe it's central mainframe or engine room, some place of import, and use it as a leverage to force the merchants to stop their attack on humanity...

"If the Hope is gone, then there is not much else we can do, other than..."

Ren Tao's eyes flashed with malice as he forced his sentence out through gritted teeth.

"Blow this ship up and make sure these cretins die alongside mankind!"

Chapter 242: Assault and Mindbreaker

Ren Tao's plan was, to say the least, insane, but it was the only hope the troopers had left. The troopers had conflicted feelings about his plan. On the one hand, they wished to know the latest information about the Hope, but on the other, they were afraid to find out. If not for their impressive constitution, they would have ended up languishing in despair.

There were two keys to pulling off Ren Tao's plan. One of was the troopers' combat strength. After the enemy troops fell into the trap, could the troopers be fast enough to wipe out an alien siege engine troop?

If not, the fate that awaited the troopers would be death...

The second key was if the alien merchants really surrendered, would it be like how Ren Tao predicted, there would be deserters due to a lack of military discipline? If not, even if they managed to stop and overtake a siege unit, the result would be more deaths. The whole effort would be pointless.

If there was anything wrong with any of the two key points, the plan would fall apart.

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao had an emergency meeting to discuss these issues, and their conclusion was... It had to be done!

The first issue was practically a non-issue. If the Hope was already destroyed and the entire human race was wiped out, the

only resolution for this straggling group of people would either be suicide or fight to the death. There was no way they would be willing to survive to be used as lab rats by the alien merchants. Therefore, this was a risk that they had to take to know about the latest situation on the Hope.

The more troubling was the second issue, whether the alien merchants would surrender when cornered...

"I need further confirmation."

By then, Ren Tao had more or less returned to his usual self. However, the group could see that his calm façade was only a front to contain his inner craziness. In fact, the current Ren Tao was more dangerous than usual because like an active volcano, he could blow up anytime, and the more he kept his emotions in, the greater the impact when he eventually exploded.

However, the calm façade was still useful because at least he could use his Thinker power. He turned to the Black Star Unit to ask, "Who among you is the interrogator? Don't deny that there is one! You people are from a special unit task force, one that I've not even heard about before, but from my observations, one of the best. Therefore, there is no reason for you guys to not know interrogation or torture skills. I just want to find out what kind of torture you guys are familiar with. Or is the interrogator of the Black Star Unit not here?"

Ying and the guys looked at each other with a knowing look before all turning to Liu Bai.

Liu Bai shrugged with his hands open to his side. "Fine, you caught me. I am the interrogator in this unit... but only because they say the one most familiar with human anatomy has to be interrogator, I don't personally agree with that sentiment since I know a few psychologists that are better than me at interrogation, but either way, I'm sure I can handle a few alien interrogations if that's what you're going for."

Ren Tao clapped his hands and said, "Then that's the plan. Even if the space merchants don't surrender, we can use mental tactics since they're a multi-racial unit. Divide and conquer; after we capture them, we split the enemies according to race. We pick one of the random races for interrogation, torture the few of them until they die, and then we let go of the rest. The other races will sweat and then a few of them will most likely surrender. Easy, right?"

Before Ying and the group could understand what he meant, Liu Bai nodded. "You're right. This idea is even better than interrogating them individually. Because since they are from different races, there will be natural precaution against each other. Releasing one or two from one particular race is going to create a cleft between their trust, and that will make things a lot easier. Alright, leave it to me."

With this out of the way, the rest was a cakewalk. Ying, Ebon and Liu Bai were combat experts. After all, they were from the Black Star Unit. It would be laughable if the special ops weren't good at battle.

With Zhang Heng's danger detection as guidance, Ying's group set up a simple trap with expedience. The troop was separated into two. Zhang Heng would lead a group that would act as the bait, while Ying led another that would pounce on the enemy. 10 minutes of high-speed scouting later, they found the perfect spot to lay their trap.

The contact was fierce and furious. Due to the isolated location and the trooper's deliberate sabotage of the corridors, the carrier point they assaulted had only 200 soldiers, and they had difficulty getting backup quickly. As Ying predicted, this was a heavy machinery unit.

The unit consisted of a few siege engines. One of them was a spherical vehicle with caterpillar tracks; it looked just like an evolved tank. Instead of mobility, the tracks were used more for balance in zero-gravity space since the space merchants didn't have access to anti-gravity technology yet.

The tank was large in size; based on a rudimentary gauge, it could fit about 20 soldiers. There were four of them there.

Other than that, there was a 2-person controlled motorcycle-esque floating vehicle. It had incredible speed and was very mobile. There were about 40 of them floating 3 meters off the ground. At the top of each one was a large, heavy weapon, its power unknown.

Next was a composite-looking vehicle with many legs. This was the most high-tech siege engine Ying's group had come across so far.

The way to control this machine was a complete unknown. It was made up of multiple transparent cabins, and each cabin housed a big-brained alien. The outer walls of the cabins were laced with conspicuous gun barrels, and each of the cabins was linked together via a long, metallic, reel chain. The reel chain was moving without a specific pattern. In other words, all the transparent cabins tied to the chain were moving and evading without a specific pattern either. Sometimes, the chain would materialize into two metallic legs to support its total weight, but other times, the chain would shift and materialize into three, four, five, or six legs. And each time, the point of contact they made with the ground would be different. The whole contraption was bouncing irregularly all over the place, making aiming and shooting incredibly difficult.

There was only one such siege engine, and it was right in the middle of troop, acting as the general it would seem.

When this thing appeared, Ying, who was hiding in the aliens' blind spot, activated his Seeker power and studied their weakness while Zhang Heng's bait group retreated to their pre-assigned spot. According to the plan, the unit would give chase to Zhang Heng. The rest of the ambush unit waited with bated breath for Ying to issue the order.

However, suddenly, bright globes of light appeared above the few cabins, and a visible riptide that practically tore through space started to ripple throughout the battlefield. Both Ying's group that was in hiding and Zhang Heng's group that was retreated were caught in its snare.

At that moment, everyone felt their brains surfeited with thousands of cries from unknown origins. The sounds crashed on top of each other, and it was so strong that some of them started to see illusions of swirling colors and pictures in the air. The few business experts that had just revived started screeching and scratching at their heads crazily like they were trying to pull their heads out with the space helmets.

Compared to them, the space troopers fared better, but they weren't exactly unaffected. They felt the echoes materializing in their brains into ants crawling and burrowing into it. Itchiness, pain, lethargy, hunger, all sorts of sensation assaulted their body. The Black Star Unit gritted their teeth in response to the assault, but the rest had started screaming, a few steps away from going insane like the group of business experts.

This was a... mind-break attack?!

Or more possibly, electromagnetic waves that could directly target mankind's brain.

Ying gnashed his teeth in fury until they were bloodied. He knew this was the end for them. Being captured was only a matter of time. Instead of being kept as test subjects, suicide was a more honorable choice...

They truly had underestimated the space merchants. After all, their opponent had lasted so long in space, of course they wouldn't be that weak. When they mounted a counter-attack, mankind was

defenseless...

As Ying, Ebon and Liu Bai pulled out their weapons to give their team mates and then themselves a more dignified ending, their eyes unconsciously swept to fall on two people that were standing there unaffected!

They were Ren Tao and Xiao Niao. However, they looked different from usual. Their brains were working in high gear from the activation of their Thinker power, so the only thing they were hearing around them was silence...

Several seconds later, the weird-looking siege engine started to gyrate uncontrollably, and the big-brained aliens driving the cabin were screaming in anguish. Their brains started popping one after another. Not only them, the aliens close to this siege engine started rolling on the ground and screaming before their heads also burst like balloons...

One second later, the screams in the troopers' minds suddenly stopped. It was as if everything that had happened was an illusion. Other than the few that had fainted, at least 10 people stood up with confused looks in their eyes.

Ying didn't hesitate to give his orders. Brandishing his sawblade, he yelled, "Charge! Give them hell!"

At the same time, Ren Tao and Xiao Niao looked at each other with a curious gleam in their eyes. Ren Tao whispered, "You heard the message in the soundwave attack, right?"

"Yes, I did. It was incomplete, but... it was definitely there," Xiao Niao replied, with a curious expression.

"This space merchant unit was..."

"Cheated by another human group! They were swindled by the human officials that left Earth before us!"

Chapter 243: Despair and Madness

Even though only about ten people charged into the fray, this was the moment the space merchant siege engine troop was at its weakest. The weird siege machine was scrapped, and several big-brained aliens in it were dead from brain explosion. The aliens near it were affected as well; they died trapped in their vehicles, causing the whole troop to succumb into chaos.

Ying took advantage of the chaos and charged forward. The first targets they went after were the floating motorcycles.

Under normal circumstances, these vehicles would prove to be a challenge for the troopers because they were floating and were highly mobile. Furthermore, as a siege vehicle, it was practically a given that they were equipped with electromagnetic shields that would require an extended period of focus fire from the troopers before breaking. Therefore, the only way was combat quarters combat. While the troopers were fast enough to catch up with the motorcycles, unfortunately, the space armors didn't provide them with the ability to fly.

However, with the entire alien unit in chaos, the already lacking in discipline and morale space merchant military was practically defenseless. When they saw the Black Star Troopers charging at them, the multi-racial space merchants abandoned their posts and ran. Each issued their unique racial screams and escaped from the scene either in their own vehicles or jumped out of the vehicles and scurried away on foot.

This unique situation gave some troopers pause, but it didn't

slow Ying down; if anything, it made Ying crueler. Like Liu Bai once told Jay and Zhang Heng, Ying was the most emotionless member in the Black Star Unit...

While some troopers were standing in shock, Ying increased the speed of his space armor to the maximum and leaped into the middle of the space merchant unit. Like a bloody whirlwind, he left behind a trail of alien bodies in his wake. The sawblade was the epitome of sharpness among all 4th revolution close-range weaponry. At least, among the known 4th revolution materials, only a few of them could withstand the slashing of this weapon. The siege engine before them was not one of those.

The rest of the troopers finally came to after Ying ruthlessly decimated about 10 running aliens. They fell in behind Ying, and the place immediately became a sea of blood. This continued until Liu Bai pressed down hard on Ying's shoulder, shouting into his ear, "F*ck! The plan is to capture them for interrogation, isn't it? What are you doing? Are you aiming to kill them all again?"

Ying wasn't angry from the sudden accusation. He merely lifted his head to look around at the devastation he had caused. The ground was littered with alien body parts, and about 10 aliens were cowering inside their vehicles, shaking with fear. Most of the alien either had escaped or were cut down. This impressive-looking siege engine unit was taken down before they could even fire a single bullet. When they finally calmed down from their bloodlust, the troopers were enveloped by a curious suspicion.

"Stop the killing, keep a few alive for capture," Ying ordered calmly. He promptly ignored the eye-roll Ebon and Liu Bai gave

him, because he was the one who had the most kills, the one that couldn't be stopped.

Even so, the troopers didn't let their guard down. After the war with the mother nest alien, Yao Yuan and Guang Zhen put the military through a lot of training and introduced more stringent military laws to improve overall discipline, to prevent the presence of deserters. The space troopers followed war protocol and split into pre-assigned groups without explicit orders from Ying. Some were responsible for capturing the aliens, others for checking for allies' injuries and setting up a guarding perimeter.

Liu Bai was afraid the mind-breaker attack from before had killed the business experts, but after he gave them a rudimentary check, he realized that they had merely fainted. The group sighed in relief, and it was finally time for the interrogation.

After a simple discussion, they needed to establish communication with the aliens first. However, since Ren Tao was emotionally unstable, the candidate selected was Xiao Niao.

"I know you can understand me. We have some questions for you. Answer them truthfully and we will let you go safely. If you don't, then there will be hell to pay," Xiao Niao switched his speech frequency to match the junkyard aliens' to communicate with the space merchants.

There were about 10 captured aliens. Two of them were the big-brained aliens. They appeared to have suffered great physical injuries, as a faded, blue-blood-like liquid was oozing out of their noses, ears, and other orifices of which uses were unknown. The

other alien races crowded around the two of them, as if protecting them.

After Xiao Niao spoke his piece, a contained commotion appeared among the small group of aliens. A few weirdly-shaped ones replied with an unknown speech frequency. Naturally, none of the human beings understood it. After some time, the aliens understood the issue and they switched to the junkyard aliens' speech frequency. Alas, Xiao Niao's space armor computer was greatly disrupted, so he could barely understand what was being said.

Xiao Niao replied instantly, "Our computer system is all offline due to your mother ship's disturbance. Either you stop the disturbance or use your own computers to translate into our language. F*ck, drop the charade. You already know we are the human race, and you have stumbled across the human language before! Just directly translate to the human language!"

As Xiao Niao said so, he signaled Liu Bai, who stood beside him. Liu Bai pulled a centipede-like alien out from the group roughly and cut open its stomach. Liu Bai made sure to avoid the vital organs so that the alien would struggle crazily on the floor without actually dying. This stunned the group of aliens into a shocked silence before they started screaming in each of their own languages. The language barrier didn't stop the message of fear from being understood.

"Our time is limited, so don't try to drag this out. At every interval of thirty seconds... I don't know how your time is calculated, but the interval will be set at 30 seconds. If we see no

progress, then we will kill one of you every 30 seconds, so don't dally!" Xiao Niao said, with as much threat as he could muster.

After the aliens heard him, the screaming stopped. One of the snake-like aliens slithered to a floating motorcycle nearby, but it started screaming when it was half way there. It fell to the floor and started rolling around like it was in immense pain. Very soon, it went still like it had died.

This sudden development made the troopers look around in alarm. They raised their rifles and trained them at their captives. Any sudden movements or an order from Ying and these captives would be beehives.

Right then, the two big-brained alien parted themselves from the group. With shaking bodies, they communicated in English, "We know your language. You are a life form called Homo Sapiens, carbon-based, warm-blooded, and a young space civilization. Of course we know your race... You bunch of shameless thieves!"

Ying's group was confused by the sudden insult, but they made no move. After all, they were the victors, so a little insult from their captives was harmless. The key was finishing the mission. Xiao Niao was a little speechless from the accusation. He offered, after a few seconds, "I doubt you'll believe me even if I say this is all a misunderstanding. To be specific, the group of humans that has tricked you is not us... The two groups might be of the same race, but they have nothing to do with us!"

A small surge of electricity appeared within the big-brained alien's brain. It was the unknown what the purpose of it was, but

after the electrical surge disappeared, the alien continued, "You can't weasel your way out of this. How can the two of you be unrelated when you're of the same race? We pitied you, and because you were a new space civilization, we gave you the star navigation chart to the nearest shelter for free, and you people said you were willing to use half your population and half your cosmic adaptors to trade for technologies and materials. However, you bunch of Saharian Space Maggots use an incomplete wormhole technology or a pseudo-wormhole to escape after taking the technology and materials! Do you think we space merchants are dummies? This time you masqueraded as a Level 2 civilization to try to swindle us again! You people are the worst of the space trash, the..."

Xiao Niao interrupted him, "You can scold all you want, but it is pointless. You are now a captive, and I'm telling you, it's a misunderstanding. Regardless, we still have no clue about our mother ship's information, and if the damage isn't irreparable, there is still a chance for a peace treaty... Therefore, I have three demands for you. Number one, tell me what has happened to our mother ship. Number two, give me the map to this ship. Number three, tell me how to stop the disturbance to our computer systems."

The two big-brained aliens looked at one another and started cackling. After that, they swiped their fingers at the space before them and suddenly a 3D image appeared. It was showing what was happening in space. More than a thousand circular combat jets were surrounding the Hope. The video moved to show the explosion of Defender One, Two, and the Observer. Finally, the Hope itself went out with a bang...

Ren Tao split the big-brained alien into two. The Space Troopers cut the rest of the captives into mincemeat...

At that moment, there was no longer any rationality left in the troopers. The only thing that remained was madness...

Chapter 244: Fifth Revolution Weaponry and... Surrender?

While Ying's group was isolated from the Hope and tricked by the big-brained aliens, back on the Hope, the Yao Yuan-led Black Star Troopers were piloting Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets to combat a continuous wave of circular combat jets... it was a one-sided massacre.

The difference in the two parties' fighter jet quality was even greater than Yao Yuan imagined. The Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets were better than the space merchants' space combat jets by miles!

The quality of electromagnetic shield generator and metallic tensile strength that were hard to gauge aside, the competition of speed alone was hands-down won by the Prototype 003s!

The circular combat jets had incredible balance, and just like mankind's classical sci-fi UFOs, they could accelerate and decelerate freely, ignoring the rules of inertia. On this particular point, the circular jets were indeed better than the Prototype 003s.

However, this small advantage couldn't compete with the fully-trained Black Star Troopers. With their ability to sense malice and their greater military discipline, advantages like free acceleration and deceleration were as good as nothing.

If the circular combat jets were faster than the Prototype 003s, then perhaps they would be a threat. However, the circular combat

jets were much slower than the Prototype 003s.

This came as a pleasant surprise to Yao Yuan. The circular combat jets' speed was not as good as their ability in free acceleration and deceleration. Their speed was only half the speed of Survivor-piloted Combat Jets. For Red Lightning, the circular combat jets were practically as slow as snails. For the Homo Evolutis, the space merchants were no threat.

After activating his Thinker power, Yao Yuan realized where the problem was.

It was due to the speed of reflex.

Even though mankind and the space merchants were in the 4th revolution, the combat jets still had to be manually-piloted and not computerized. The quality of the combat jets was wholly dependent on the quality of the pilots. If the pilots were unable to support flying at a high speed, having a high-speed jet would be nothing more than a waste.

Therefore, in this battle, the Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets had the evident upper hand. Even though they were lacking in firepower, with coordinated movement, they could still take down their enemies.

A short ten minutes crossfire later, almost half of the circular jets were taken down and zero Prototype 003 jets were lost. Such a one-sided result wasn't seen before when mankind was on Earth, much less in space. It was something akin to a miracle.

When Yao Yuan led the troopers to take advantage of winning the skirmish, the circular combat jets started to flee towards their mother ship. The bigger spaceship started doing so even earlier. Yao Yuan shot down the propulsion engines of the few spaceships which were suspected to carry kidnapped humans. Other than those, the rest were already congregating around their mother ship.

There were about 10,000 space merchant troops still on the Hope, but the spaceships had abandoned them completely. This situation alarmed Yao Yuan.

"...I smell danger."

Yao Yuan used his Anima power to stop the troopers from pursuing the fleeing space merchants. For some reason, when he saw the spaceships and combat jets returning and gathering around their mother ship, he had a bad omen. Since Yao Yuan also had access to Diviner power, he knew what this meant... The mother ship had something that could destroy the Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets!

The Homo-Evolutis-piloted combat jets were unbeatable in close combat... unless they were faced with scientifically-advanced weapons, like ones from the 5th revolution, such as sophisticated laser weapons, sophisticated plasma weapons, or sophisticated light beam weapons!

These weapons probably could shoot down Prototype 003 jets

before the pilot within had the chance to react. After all, light-speed was not something humans could bypass easily. They might sense it coming, but the body couldn't react fast enough to avoid the danger. Therefore, if the mother ship did have some kind of 5th revolution weapon, then pursuing the space merchants back to their mother ship would mostly likely end up a suicide mission.

"Activate ECS System to its maximum capacity! All combat jets, prepare for evasion!"

Yao Yuan ordered through his Anima power. Before he could come up with the next order, the space merchants' mother ship underwent a weird change before their eyes!

The mother ship turned to face the Hope, and numerous electromagnetic layers like the electromagnetic shield appeared in the cosmos. Behind each layer was a spaceship. The circuits on the spaceships started flashing, and energy could be seen gathering on the electromagnetic layers before them.

The spaceships moved into formation and the layers piled onto one another, creating a bright mirage in space. Eventually, the electromagnetics layers melded into a cylinder-shaped object that was more than 100 meters thick and more than 10,000 meters long!

The situation took mankind's breath away. This was the first time ever since the space merchants assaulted mankind that they revealed a technology that was vastly superior to mankind's. This was a technology that eluded mankind's understanding! This was definitely a threat!

"Fifth revolution technology!"

Yao Yuan mumbled subconsciously to himself before turning back to look at the Hope behind him...

The Hope had regained its power, but it was still unmoving. Evidently, the code or virus the space merchants had used to control the Hope was still in effect, locking the Hope down. Without mobility or ECS system, the Hope was pretty much a giant target.

Yao Yuan had no idea what the power of this weapon was, but he was certain that with just one shot... the Hope would disintegrate into space dust...

"Attack! Everyone, attack! Aim at what you think is the weakness on the enemy's mother ship! Attack!"

Yao Yuan realized it was not the time to be cautious anymore. As he gave the attack order, Red Lightning rushed forward with its speed that was thrice the normal combat jet's. Like an actual red lightning bolt, it reached a spot that was 10 kilometers away from the mother ship in a matter of minutes.

His feeling of danger was at its peak. He didn't dare to dawdle. With a tip of the control stick, Red Lightning careened towards the mother ship. Behind him, 0.3 seconds later, about ten particle beams shot at his previous location. Truth be told, Yao Yuan didn't catch what kind of attack it was, laser? Plasma? Light-beam? Or

something else completely? The only trace that the Red Lightning was attacked were the trails of the ten particle beams. They looked suspiciously like the particle streams of the corpuscular propellers.

The rest of the troopers followed behind Yao Yuan. When they flew dangerously close to the mother ship, the shell of the mother ship became something like a porcupine. In the blink of an eye, about 10 Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets flared up in fire and smoke before exploding in a mess of fire. Other than that, there was no trace of an attack...

"...Retreat! Other than the Perceptors, everyone retreat more than 10 kilometers away from their mother ship! I repeat, retreat!"

Yao Yuan screamed while he controlled Red Lightning to fire another round of focus fire using all the weapons he had at his disposal at the mother ship, but...

It was no use, completely useless!

Compared to the circular combat jets and the spaceships, the mother ship was simply too large. Even though it was still smaller than the junkyard civilization's main ship, it was still the size of a small planet. The Prototype 003 Combat Jets were as small as mosquitoes before it. Their attacks were easily taken down by its electromagnetic shield, causing not even a ripple...

This series of pointless attacks lasted for about ten minutes. Within that period, another two combat jets fell. Despair crept into Yao Yuan's heart. He was overwhelmed by the superiority of their

enemy...

The last time he felt this way was during the neutron star apocalypse...

The electromagnetic layers in front of the mother ship almost materialized into a solid object.

A blurry light beam visible to the naked eye fired from the cylinder-shaped object. The attack looked surprisingly fluid. The shot ebbed and flowed as it missed the Hope by 5 kilometers before disappearing into the wide cosmos.

"It missed?!" Yao Yuan was given a sudden reprieve from despair, but soon the reality came crashing back down.

"Impossible, the distance between the two mother ships is not far. Without the protection of the ECS system, the Hope is a sitting duck, so there is no way they would miss, The only reason for this is...

"They want us to surrender!"

Chapter 245: Super Magnetic Track Cannon!

After the shot was fired, the solid amalgamation of electromagnetic layers disintegrated. However, the space merchants started charging, and the outline of the cannon began to appear again.

This was some sort of plasma weapon!

Yao Yuan was certain of that fact!

This was a product from the peak of the 4th revolution, a product of the scale of a giant airship, the ultimate planet destruction weapon, the Genesis Cannon. This was a technology that lied between the peak of electromagnetic technology from 4th revolution and the plasma technology from beginning of the 5th. This was something Yao Yuan had been hoping to build but was limited by technology. They had the necessary materials, but the Academy predicted that they would need at least another fifty years before work on the cannon could start in earnest. Therefore, the super weapon only existed on paper so far.

The weapon that the space merchants were using was the perfect Genesis Cannon, or rather, an actual Genesis Cannon using the plasma technology of the 5th revolution and not the electromagnetic technology of the 4th.

The blurry shot of light might look insignificant, but once it hit, the Hope would immediately melt and explode. If used on a normal

planet the size of Earth, the power of one shot was enough to destroy one third of the surface layer, melting it with the high temperature of a microwave oven. This was a sign of the 5th revolution!

An actual plasma weapon!

Of course, for something as powerful as the Genesis Cannon, every shot required an extremely large pool of energy. Even for the weapons from the 5th revolution, this was true. The situation might be different for the 6th revolution, but they perhaps would be dealing with a different kind of weaponry then. Therefore, like what the Academy said, industrial revolutions were nothing more than the development of more efficient energy sources.

Yao Yuan had started using his Thinker power. Mankind was fighting a losing warfare, the space merchants' mother ship had an indestructible defense, and the Hope was still under lockdown. It couldn't evade or move; it couldn't even enter ECS mode to avoid the merchants' long-distance targeting system, much less space warp. It was a sitting duck...

No, there must be a way out of this!

When there's a will there's a way. There must be something he hadn't thought about before, there had to be!

Yao Yuan's Thinker power was activated to its maximum, so much so that he felt a bit of a headache from over-exertion. His body even started to spasm. He was almost hit by the track

cannons on the surface of the mother ship. However, it was thanks to this near death danger that Yao Yuan's attention was pulled to the giant mother ship.

"Right, our people are still on the mother ship. With Ying, Ebon, Liu Bai, Zhang Heng, Ren Tao, and Xiao Niao, they have both brawns and brains, so there is no way they have been killed or captured. Even though their current situation is unknown, at least maybe we can reach out to them somehow...

"Either that or undo the code infecting the Hope, then we can space warp again. This too is not a bad idea...

"If nothing works, then we can only... No, we cannot surrender. Either we die fighting, win, or escape!"

Surrender... is not an option!

Yao Yuan understood the implication of surrender. Without the military's protection, mankind would become something like livestock to the space merchants, or even worse, live experiments. Humans might be made into live specimens, tested on without regards for the value of life... This was no joke; it would be a fate worse than death!

Therefore, only an idiot would surrender to the space merchants!

"Regardless, the main thing to do now is stall!"

With a plan in mind, Yao Yuan used his Anima power to inform the whole military, "Everyone, retreat to set up a defensive perimeter around the Hope! Be careful not to stray too close to the Hope's creator's particle range!"

Following Yao Yuan's orders, all of the Prototype 003 jets started to distance themselves from the space merchants' mother ship. The space merchants didn't give chase. Instead, they focused on charging the Genesis Cannon, as if it had made the decision to abandon the few spaceships that were stranded in space because their propulsion systems had been blown off.

Before long, Yao Yuan led the troopers back to the area around the Hope, then he used his Anima power to pinpoint Bo Li's location.

It is worth noting that Yao Yuan's Anima power was not as good as a pure Anima's. His power was less effective than Barbie's, the newly awakened Anima, much less Xi Kong, the most powerful Anima the Hope had. Yao Yuan's Anima power was limited by distance; his power could only reach so far and he could only converse with other Homo Evolutis. This was the biggest weakness of his Anima power.

Yao Yuan was 10 kilometers away from the Hope when he activated his Anima power to search for Bo Li's location. Very quickly, he found the orb of fire that represented the Whisperer, Bo Li, among the sea of people.

"Bo Li! This is Yao Yuan. How is the current condition on the Hope? Is the central mainframe back under control? How much

longer until it can be used? Has Guang Zhen found the Black Dragons yet? Did they riot? How many enemies are left in the ship? Get me the answers and tell Xi Kong to pass them over to me." Yao Yuan sent all this information through the soul-web to Bo Li.

Bo Li was currently busy fixing the central mainframe. There were no soldiers around her anymore, just a group of normal human experts. About 100 of them were there working on the central mainframe. Everyone was wearing a mask of anxiety and worry.

When Bo Li heard Yao Yuan's voice, she immediately turned to Xi Kong beside her. "Help me pass on these words to Yao Yuan, he is near the Hope. Tell him that the Hope's central mainframe was a no-go. Even though we've found the virus, it is an extremely mysterious quantum computer code, a quantum-level computer virus so to speak. When it was unnoticed, it exists in a certain manner, but after it is found out, it will change into another. And whenever we managed to break a bit of its defense, it self-recovered and changed its signal structure. Without the original coding, with our current computer technology, it will take at least a decade to break it, so tell him to not place any hope on the central mainframe...

"After that, tell him Guang Zhen has found the Black Dragons and is leading up to clear away the remaining enemies on the Hope. According to Guang Zhen, the enemy troops have lost the will to fight. After the combat situation turned with the arrival of the Black Dragons, they started to flee. Currently, we have 1,000 captives, so it's only a matter of time until Guang Zhen clears them out completely. The Defense Unit soldiers are keeping the captives

under control, so he needn't worry about that... Also, I've caught a glimpse of the space merchants' weapon and I'm sure that's the final form of the Genesis Cannon. In other words, a plasma weapon from the early 5th revolution, the Requiem!"

Xi Kong carefully repeated Bo Li's every word. She was slightly shaking with fear, as if afraid of the aloof Bo Li.

Thanks to her, Yao Yuan had an overall understanding of the situation within the Hope. He thought about it and then said, "Bo Li, now I need you to help me with two things. One is to carry the almost finished supermagnetic orbit cannon using your alien robot and bring it to me. I will dispose of Red Lightning to monitor it. Currently, the cannon allows for three shots before overheating, right? The second thing I need you to do is have Xi Kong contact Ying's group within the space merchants' mother ship. I need an update on their current situation. In less than five minutes, the Requiem will fire another shot at the Hope... and I don't think it will miss this time!"

Bo Li was stunned. She stood there motionless for a few minutes as if weighing the options in her mind. Then she turned to Xi Kong. "Help me with these words too. The supermagnetic orbit cannon's technical aspect is not yet perfected. The one we have now is only a prototype, plus, important parts like cooling chambers haven't even been fitted yet. Yes, it can fire three shots safely, but a huge explosion might follow the third shot, consuming the cannon itself. The weapon is simply too dangerous..."

As the words came into Yao Yuan's mind, he interrupted Bo Li.

"This is the last chance we have! This is the only weapon we have that can possibly harm the space merchants' mother ship, since the Supermagnetic Planet Annihilating Rail-Cannon is offline! Furthermore, I'm only using it to disturb the energy charging process of the Requiem. There is no time for explanations, get your alien robot to bring the cannon outside of the Hope! This is an order!"

Bo Li sighed before turning to Xi Kong. "Tell him that if he dies, I will never forgive him as long as I have a breath in me... Also, Yao Yuan wants you to use your power to locate Ying's group and try to get an update from them if you can." Bo Li climbed onto one of the alien robot's tentacles and rushed towards the weapons testing room that was on the fourth floor.

Xi Kong was caught by surprise. She mumbled, "Die? What death? Who died? Is Yao Yuan going to do something dangerous..."

She realized she was talking to no one, so she quickly submerged into the soul-web.

She could see that Yao Yuan's fireball was still glowing like the sun, and beyond that, the group of fireballs that represented the Black Star Troopers around the sun. She went beyond the Hope and quickly found Ying's group within the space merchants' mother ship. She quickly sent them the message.

At that moment, Ying's group was in throes of madness. The presence of two Thinkers completely neutralized the aliens' mind-breaker attacks, and after the unfortunate death of three soldiers, they were on their way of demolishing their fourth siege unit.

Currently, they were massacring the captives from the fourth unit.

Suddenly, they heard Xi Kong's voice in their minds. Like a crisp and melodious song, it pierced through the haze of madness. Suddenly, there was hope in their despairing hearts, and some of them started sobbing uncontrollably...

Chapter 246: Abandon...

Ying's group had lost their grasp on sanity, mowing everything in their path to reach the mother ship's central location to demolish it. They were hoping for it to be the engine room, that way they would die together with the whole ship of despicable space merchants.

Madness and despair had overwhelmed their sanity, including Ren Tao and Xiao Niao. They kept no prisoners, so there was no way for them to know they had been tricked. From the moment they saw the Hope explode, the only thing left in their hearts was despair. Since there was destruction waiting for them, why not drag the space merchants along with them?

They vented through destruction, but they knew it was only a matter of time before reality's despair would come crashing back down. Even if they destroyed the mother ship, would humanity be saved?

When Xi Kong's voice appeared in their minds, there was a light shining through the miasma of despair. They were startled and found it hard to believe what they were hearing. They confirmed it was Xi Kong, and some in the group had started to cry.

Ying looked at the pile of alien body parts unfeelingly and spat, "We've been tricked, the Hope hasn't been destroyed! That alien had us fooled!"

Ren Tao continued in a similarly chilling tone, "That's right.

That alien wanted to push us over the edge, and we fell for its trick so easily. Looks like these aliens are shrewder than we thought... That was careless of us."

Liu Bai didn't dawdle; instead, he asked, "Then what should we do now? There is still no way for us to contact the people on the Hope, as we don't have any Anima with us."

Ren Tao's face was frosted over. He pointed at the remaining 7 or 8 alien captives that they were going to kill, adding, "Simple, leave two or three live ones and kill the rest. Xi Kong is the most powerful Anima we have; she can communicate with common people and even see the fireballs that represent their souls. I believe she'll be able to see the fireballs representing these aliens as well. By slowly extinguishing the aliens' soul flames around us, she'll be able to tell we are still alive."

Ying wasted no time and walked towards the group of alien captives. He cut through the aliens one by one without hesitation like a god of war plying his judgment.

Back on the Hope, Xi Kong was hamstrung because the communication was only one-way. She realized there was no Anima in Ying's group, so how was she going to know their situation? At that moment, the weak soul flames around Ying's group started to get extinguished one by one. Xi Kong was originally confused, but when she understood that those were the aliens' soul flames, she quickly passed on the information to Yao Yuan.

"So, Ying's group is surviving and is killing the aliens' military

inside the mother ship..."

This was welcome news for Yao Yuan. He was waiting for the supermagnetic orbit cannon outside of the Hope. After he received the message, he replied Xi Kong, "Then repeat the following orders to Ying. This is Yao Yuan, I order your group to locate and destroy the core system within the enemy's mother ship in the next 30 minutes. The goal is to paralyze the space merchant's mother ship, so it can be the polymerized reactor, the central mainframe, or anything that looks important, half an hour, spare no expenses! Lastly, as Black Stars, for glory... Tell them all this!"

Xi King memorized his words and then passed them on word for word to Ying's group.

Ying was killing the fifth alien when his team received Xi Kong's message. Ying, Liu Bai, and Ebon looked at each other in silence and stopped to process everything after the message finished.

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao noticed their silence and quickly asked whether there was something wrong with the message.

"No, there's nothing suspicious about the message," Ebon explained. "It's just that the Black Star Unit has a slogan, I guess you can call it, but we will not use it at any random moment, because every time the slogan is mentioned, it means that it is a life or death situation. It's kill or be killed..."

Xiao Niao understood immediately. "Got it, so this means that the Hope is facing a huge tragedy that threatens its existence, and our

team might be the only hope they have left. Now I can see why the message is filled with so many choice words like 'spare no expenses'..."

Ying nodded before turning to address his team, "We are now tasked with the most important mission, so let's be on our toes. Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, and Liu Bai, I want the three of you to interrogate these alien captives and get our location and the map of this ship out of them. Ebon, you and I will check the aliens' siege engines and weapon storage to see whether we can salvage some of them. Zhang Heng, you will be responsible to be the lookout and warn us if there's any danger. The rest help out Zhang Heng. We'll stay here for 3 to 5 minutes, so be quick!"

After Ying gave his orders, everyone moved to oblige. Even the business experts stood alongside the troopers to help with the lookout.

As Ying and Ebon sifted through the aliens' siege engines and weapon storage, they found several interesting heavy weapons. There was a rifle that fired spindle-shaped light orbs. It had a long reload time; it took 8 seconds to reload before it could fire another bullet, but the damage was incredible. Earlier, one trooper was unlucky enough to be struck by one of the light orbs, and his body shook before bursting in a gory splatter. It was like being rammed into by a speeding train. The damage was so high that not even the spaceship's inner walls could withstand it, which brought up the question: Why were the aliens willing to use such a powerful weapon inside their spaceship?

Ying's group had come across this weapon which they dubbed

the Seiya Gun before, but the ones they came across had their energy depleted. The gun exhausted a huge amount of energy for each shot, and even with 100% charge, it could only fire 3 shots. The group had no idea how the aliens charged these weapons, so they didn't take the weapons with them. Now they were searching for fully-charged Seiya Guns.

As they flipped through the weapon storage, Ebon suddenly whispered, "Ying, what shall we do regarding those business experts? They have no space armor protection and can't catch up to our speed. The mission is only 30 minutes, so I'm afraid... they'll be nothing but added weight."

Ying was silent for a beat or two before answering, "Yes, this is going to be a problem. I'll have a chat with them later."

Ebon went back to concentrate on the task at hand, trying to find out ways to use them. After quite some time, he added, "It's not that I want to abandon them, but if we fail this mission, it's over for the Hope and humanity. We have no choice but to..."

Ying interrupted him, "I understand, but certain things have to be done for the sake of humanity... These people have to be left behind, because if the mission fails, then we'll be facing a bigger loss."

The two continued their work in silence. Two minutes later, Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, and Liu Bai approached them with the result of their interrogation. Ying and Ebon eventually located three useable heavy weapons from the weapon pile. Two were high-power Gaussian rifles that were similar to mankind's Gaussian

cannon and the last was a Seiya Gun that still had 2 shots in it.

"The mother ship is delineated according to race. The separation is incredibly complicated. We've seen a general map of the mother ship, and generally it can be separated into 7 levels. Unfortunately, we couldn't get a geographical map of the ship; perhaps the aliens were reluctant to give it to us. Regardless, we're running out of time, so we decided not to waste any time on them. Of these 7 levels, the only system of import was a main energy circuit. This was confirmed by our interrogation. The circuit is connected to the mother ship's four polymerized reactors, so if we can locate the main circuit and follow it, it will eventually leads us to the reactors," Ren Tao concluded.

Ying nodded and said, in a loud order, "Everyone, do a last minute check of your equipment and space armors. We're starting the mission soon, and we're not stopping until the mission ends. Unless all of us die, we're not going to stop until we destroy this group of reactors, even if the group only has one member left. In the scenario that I die in combat, Liu Bai will take over the mission, over!"

After that, under everyone's scrutiny, Ying walked to stop before the group of business experts. Facing their begging eyes, Ying steeled his heart and said, "We can't protect you anymore. This mission is related to the survival of the Hope, of humanity, and we ourselves might pay our lives undertaking this mission, so we can't allow any mistakes. Without space armors, I'm sorry to say this, but you guys will not be able to catch up with our speed, and to be frank, your involvement will only drag us Troopers down..."

"Here are two Gaussian rifles, use them to decide your own fate. You can surrender to the aliens, or use them to force out a road or your own, or... anything you wish to do with them. Of course, you can try to keep up with the rest of us, but I assure you, it'll be difficult..."

Ying stared silently at the despair that had returned to the business experts' faces and he bowed slightly. "I'm sorry, but the group has no choice but to abandon the lot of you. If I die in combat, I will personally come apologize to you guys in the afterlife, but for now, I have to focus on the mission at hand..."

"Black Star Troopers, attention! Our target is the main energy circuit!"

Chapter 247: Time...Time!

While Ying's group started their mission, Yao Yuan was waiting anxiously for the supermagnetic orbit cannon around the Hope.

Currently, the Hope's central mainframe was still under other people's control, so the Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets didn't dare to enter the creator's particle zone lest the control of the jets was also taken away from the pilots. If that happened, they would need another blackout to escape the Hope's control.

Under such circumstances, only Bo Li's alien robot could carry something as heavy as the supermagnetic orbit cannon. Therefore, Yao Yuan specifically asked for Bo Li's help in his orders.

In reality, the supermagnetic orbit cannon wasn't huge in size. Including its base and the entire necessary accessories, it was only slightly bigger than a Prototype 003 Space Combat Jet, completely incomparable to cannons like the Supermagnetic Planet Annihilating Rail-Cannon.

However, in terms of technological level, the supermagnetic orbit cannon utilized the best of the best of electromagnetic technology. In contrast to the Genesis, which involved plasmatic technology or 5th revolution technology, the supermagnetic orbit cannon was the best weapon from the 4th revolution.

In comparison, while the Supermagnetic Planet Annihilating Rail-Cannon had greater damage and firing speed due to a specialized upgrade in ammunition technology, generally

speaking, the supermagnetic orbit cannon was more high-tech than the Supermagnetic Planet Annihilating Rail-Cannon.

The cannon still relied on pseudo-Gaussian technology which utilized high speeds to achieve increased penetration and thus damage. However, compared to weapons like Gaussian rifles, Gaussian cannons, and even the Supermagnetic Planet Annihilating Rail-Cannon, the supermagnetic orbit cannon's schema was completely different.

First and foremost, electromagnetism was no longer the pushing force. In the conceptual building of the supermagnetic orbit cannon, electromagnetic fields only acted as balance coefficients to situate the bullets during firing. The actual force that accelerated the bullet was particle force!

In a way, it was conceptually similar to the particle accelerator propulsion system. It kept a concentrated particle box behind the bullet that was stabilized by electromagnetic fields. Simply put, the constant collision between the concentration particles and the metallic ball that was the bullet would create explosive tension. After the tension achieved a force bigger than the electromagnetic force holding the bullet in place, the bullet would be shot out at an unimaginable speed...

A speed that was one-fifth of light speed!

Yes, one-fifth of light speed!

To sustain such high speed, the bullet itself must have low

density, but at the same time, it had to be sturdy enough to withstand the constant particular collision.

Not even the junkyard civilization had found a material of this quality; therefore, they had only created main cannons similar to the Supermagnetic Planet Annihilating Rail-Cannon, while the blueprint for weapons like this supermagnetic orbit cannon were kept in its system. According to educated guesses, even after entering the 5th revolution, the power of the supermagnetic orbit cannon would still be equal to or slightly better than singular plasmatic weapons. This was because plasmatic weapons would be limited by energy consumption. Therefore, there wouldn't be a plasmatic weapon that would strong enough to ruin a planet with one shot, because the energy reservoir needed to accomplish that would be impossible.

Compared to the junkyard civilization, mankind was lucky because they had come across something as valuable as the alien plants. Of all the unique alloys created by the plant, there was one that was strong enough to be used as ammo for the supermagnetic orbit cannon. Thus, research for the cannon was made possible. Of course, due to technological limitations, the created supermagnetic orbit cannon was only a prototype, the firing speed was only one-tenth of light-speed, and the bullet was only the size of a human adult's fingernail. Its damage was definitely lesser than a perfect supermagnetic orbit cannon.

However, its penetration power was equal to its perfect form. Rather than spread out the firing over the wide surface of the space merchant's mother ship, it would make more sense to focus fire on one particular spot. This way they would be able to hit the energy circuit behind the electromagnetic shields, slowing down the

charging speed of the Requiem. That was why Yao Yuan was hell-bent on using this weapon, because it was the only weapon mankind had that could harm the space merchants!

Suddenly, a silver-white mechanical marvel floated out from one of the Hope's hangar doors. Yao Yuan was able to spot a robot pushing the machine from behind. Slowly, the machine went further and further away from the Hope. When it finally left the creator's particle range, the Red Lightning quickly surged towards it.

The robot finally came to a halt and left the machine floating in space before turning back to the Hope. Yao Yuan's mission wasn't with the alien robot, so he didn't care about it. He moved Red Lightning close to the machine and opened the Red Lightning from within. He was wearing a space armor, which was technically a spacesuit, so movement and survival in space was a non-issue. Yao Yuan slipped easily from Red Lightning into the machine's seating base.

It was he who approved the research on the supermagnetic orbit cannon, so he was naturally familiar with this weapon. Of course, since he was not a scientist, he didn't know much about its theoretical construction, but he knew there was such a weapon and how to use it.

On the other hand, the electromagnetic layers around the space merchants' mother ship had coagulated to a certain degree. Based on previous experience, it would require another 2 minutes of charging before it could fire off another shot. Yao Yuan knew he had no time to dilly-dally, so he quickly familiarized himself with

the control panel within the seating base. He expediently set up the long-distance lock-on system, initiated the energy charging, and the firing had entered countdown.

It was worth mentioning that the cannon didn't come with the creator's particle isolator. The only reason it could be used then was because the Red Lightning was beside it.

As the Requiem slowly materialized, Yao Yuan's heart was at his throat. He was sweating bullets. Not only him, the Black Star Troopers around him felt the same way. This was the last chance they had, and if it failed, it meant extinction for humanity. Even if the Troopers managed to survive this onslaught, there was no way they could survive on their own in space. Furthermore, with only hundreds of them left, natural extinction was only a matter of time...

The fate of humanity fell fully on Yao Yuan's shoulders and the supermagnetic orbit cannon... If they failed, it was over!

"Quick! Faster!"

Yao Yuan had finished preparing the targeting system. Other than the automated targeting system, he also used his Seeker power to imprint every single thing on the mother ship into his eyes. Even the smallest bump couldn't escape his sight.

Yao Yuan was looking for possible energy coalescence points. After all, this weapon was very energy-consuming. The space merchants didn't have access to super conductors, and even if they

did, they still needed certain points for energy to coalesce to simplify energy distribution and transfer. Unless the space merchants were already in 6th revolution, which it didn't look like they were, there had to be such weaknesses mankind could exploit!

Therefore, attacking the energy coalescence point could not only slow down the energy from charging, but if lucky, could cause an energy implosion. The threat facing the Hope would then be neutralized...

Yao Yuan was searching high and low for such a weak point. Time slowly passed and the Requiem was almost a solid state. The supermagnetic orbit cannon had also reached its final countdown. However, Yao Yuan still hadn't found the weak point he needed. In the end, he had no choice but to switch his target onto an energy circuit, marking it within the crosshair.

"5, 4, 3..."

With the final countdown, additional particles dispersed out of the supermagnetic orbit cannon's cylindrical and square cannon barrel. It looked like the cannon were gathering power. In the blink of an eye, a straight trajectory swept across the cosmos and an almost solid particle line appeared to connect the mother ship and the supermagnetic orbit cannon.

Yao Yuan's and the troopers' gazes followed the straight line to its very end, the spot that would decide how everything ended!

Initially, nothing happened. However, several seconds later, the

electromagnetic shield appeared around the mother ship. Nevertheless, the shield that appeared was cracked. Explosions started happening on the mother ship's surface, and sparks and flames were bursting out everywhere. The damage even started to spread until it finally stopped 3 kilometers later.

Simultaneously, the electromagnetic layers in front of the mother ship started to weaken, and the energy was dispersing...

This was the power of the supermagnetic orbit cannon!

It had been 3 minutes since Ying's group started searching for the main energy circuit...

Chapter 248: Ying

"Run, he's the child of a monster..."

Ying wiped away the mud on his face and continued to walked home wordlessly, holding his bulging pockets. Inside his pockets were wheat grains, provisions, dirty dry grass, a small pack of salt, and some coins that would last him a month...

That year, Ying was nine, and his parents had been dead for two years...

Ying's parents were farmers from the poorest county in China. They had inherited their ancestors' small farming plot, and they considered themselves lucky if they could feed themselves for the day. In their small village that was isolated from the outside world, if there was no external financial support, poverty crossed generations.

Therefore, after Ying was born, his parents had a discussion and decided to venture out to work. Their village was small enough to not have basic amenities like roads, and they had to walk at least half a day to reach traffic. Even if they wanted to sell their farming produce, it would be impossible due to lack of transportation. In the end, the couple decided it was more worthwhile for them to find work outside of the village.

However...

Hidden under the city's flashing lights was the world's most

savage jungle, the steel jungle and its heartless rules.

The couple who had zero education was completely swallowed by the city. Other than menial labor, they were turned away from basically every other job. Certain upscale hotels wouldn't even hire them as dishwashers or cleaners. The basic requirement of a degree certificate impeded their chances greatly.

Just like that, the couple eked out a living in the city for a few years. After weighing all the pros and cons, it was still more lucrative than farming back at the village. However, the living cost at the city was also higher. They had no choice but to starve themselves every other day to save money for their only son. Their lifelong hope was to be able to send their son to school so that he would have a better chance at life. Education, they believed, was the great equalizer...

However, after an extended period of heavy labor and skimpy diet, the couple's health gradually declined. Finally, after a long day working in heavy rain, the wife came down with tuberculosis...

The illness pushed the couple to the brink of desperation. Even with all the money they had saved, they couldn't seek medical help as the medical fees at the city were simply too high...

Finally, the husband, with someone's introduction, earned quite a sizeable amount of cash from selling his blood to a private hospital. It was the first time ever since they reached the city that the husband could afford to purchase meat for his wife. However, contact with unclean needles at the hospital turned this blessing

into a curse. They were infected with the disease which many claimed were God's punishment for cheating sinners. However, this time, it had come for an honest couple...

Its name was... AIDS, a disease transferred via blood and bodily fluids.

The couple continued to work in the city, trying to save as much as they could. They tried selling their blood again, but after the result came back that they were infected with AIDS, the hospital rejected them. Due to the lack of education, the couple had no idea what AIDS was; they only knew they could no longer earn money by selling blood. They didn't know the disease was eating them alive.

When Ying was seven, the couple returned to the village. Even though they weren't at the critical stage yet, AIDS had ravaged their bodies to a stage where physical labor was no longer possible. Later that year, both passed away, leaving behind a seven-year-old son under the colored glasses of the whole village.

From that year onwards, Ying was boycotted by other village children, calling him child of the monsters. He took their insults quietly, staring at them wordlessly in return. Even though the village doctor had confirmed he had no AIDS, the nomenclature stuck. Soon, even the adults in the village gave him a wide berth. Occasionally, some cheeky kids would throw stones at him, and he felt so alone in the world...

Ying accidentally tripped on an alien's body under his feet. Ebon, who was beside him, gave him a handy pull. Ebon chided him,

"Hey, Ying, don't tell me you're hungry. This is the first time I've seen you commit such a mistake on the battlefield. The rest of the team won't believe it when I tell them."

Ying gave him a cold side-eye before adding, "Silence! Focus on your mission!"

Ebon chuckled devilishly, but he didn't dare to talk back. He turned to his work of sawing through an alien siege engine that was blocking their way. Among the Black Star Unit, Yao Yuan was undeniably the leader. Even after he stepped down from that position, the unit members still viewed him as their leader. The relationships within the Black Star Unit were closer and tighter than many imagined.

The one below him was Guang Zhen. That was undeniable. As Yao Yuan's biggest supporter and right hand man, Guang Zhen's role was more important than many realized, and he was the person whom Yao Yuan trusted the most. Yao Yuan had even named Guang Zhen as his successor to the Hope. It went to show how much Yao Yuan valued Guang Zhen.

The third most important person, even though the members didn't have it written down, was Ying!

Determined, stable, calm, and with great leadership qualities, even though he was the most heartless among the members, he had never raised his sword against an innocent person. If not for his fairly normal family background, Ying would've been appointed the leader to the team before Yao Yuan. Ying's profile within the team was acknowledged by Yao Yuan himself. After all,

he did order Ying to lead the group that was going to the mother ship to lead the negotiations.

At that moment, they had found out the location for the mother ship's main energy circuit and were rushing towards it.

The alien merchants had found out about their aim and had blocked their way with a series of mechanized units. Initially, the fighting spirit of the initial few units were low, but with Ying's group getting closer to the main circuit, the will for combat had a conspicuous increase. They started throwing themselves at Ying's group in earnest. The previous alien unit they fought, for example, had no deserters.

Ying stared quietly at the corridor before them. The corridor was huge and deep, and they had no idea how long it would go on for, but they knew for a fact that the end of that corridor would be where the mother ship kept its energy reactors. That was their mission's destination; however, God knows how many ambushes were waiting for them.

Ying suddenly asked Liu Bai, "What time is it now? How much time do we have left?"

Liu Bai took out a highly accurate atomic watch and replied, "It has been 12 minutes since the mission started, we have 18 minutes left. Thankfully, we're already close to our destination. After we take down another 2 or 3 alien resistance parties, we'll be there."

Ying frowned. "No, it's already too late. We need to have at least

8 minutes of wiggle room when we reach our goal in case something unexpected happens. In other words, we have at most 10 minutes left for this mission... If we continue with this speed, the mission will fail, and we have to think of something else..."

Liu Bai was startled. "Think of something else? But we are not familiar with the geological condition of our surroundings. Plus, according to the map, there is only this one way to reach the reactors. I fail to see how we can possibly speed this up..."

Ying was silent. He then called over Xiao Niao and Ren Tao and explained the situation to them. Hopefully they would come up with a solution.

This task was not easy on both of them either. They stared at each other with drawn faces for a long time, but in the end there was no solution...

Ying saw their responses and went over them to address the group. "The things slowing us down now are these siege engines that block our way. If we can ditch the aliens' siege units, our speed will naturally increase..."

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao were taken aback as a realization dawned on them. Their faces fell and Xiao Niao came out to ask, "Are you going to abandon another group of people?"

Ying had put on the same emotionless face. He answered matter-of-factly, "This is not abandonment; these people are soldiers, and as soldiers, they have to realize that the best ending is a heroic

death on the battlefield, or do all of us wish to see the mission fail? Since you two can't come up with a better idea, then we're doing this my way..."

Just like that, the unit continued progressing. Not long after that, they ran into an ambush from another alien siege unit. According to Zhang Heng's power, a large unit was also chasing them from behind. If they slowed down, they would be trapped there since the enemy numbers would be several hundred times larger than theirs...

At that moment, Ying made a decision. He ordered two Black Star Troopers to stay behind, to both engage the ambushing unit and to stall the alien units that were coming from their behind. Ying would lead the rest to break down the wall and leap through it...

Yes, this might sound impossible, but the mother ship's inner walls were a lot more fragile than its outer walls. The sawblade could cut through it if given some time. Even though it was impossible to tell what was on the other side of the wall, Ying decided to commit to the plan...

He was going to sacrifice the two troopers to buy the unit more time!

Everyone, Ebon and Liu Bai included, was solemn expressions throughout. They had complicated reactions to Ying's plan. They knew this might be the only plan available to make the mission a success, but the feeling of displeasure stuck to their hearts like a stubborn glue!

Chapter 249: Nano Repair Bot

Outside of the aliens' mother ship, Yao Yuan was still piloting the supermagnetic orbit cannon. He was surrounded by at least 10 Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets. All of the jets had activated their ECS system, completely shielding the cannon from view. This made sure that the mother ship wouldn't be able to snipe the cannon with long distance targeting.

After Yao Yuan took the first cannon shot, he immediately climbed back into Red Lightning to push the supermagnetic orbit cannon out of its original position. The caution was warranted because 10 seconds later, that spot was bombarded with weapons of varying kinds. If the cannon hadn't been moved, it would have been blown into pieces.

While Yao Yuan was moving the cannon, he activated his Anima power to order the troopers to surround the cannon, to cover its location. With the help of the ECS system, he could finally get close enough to inspect the damage done by the supermagnetic orbit cannon.

Its damage was even greater than Yao Yuan expected. Of course, it couldn't rival the Requiem, but it was at least the pinnacle of electromagnetic technology. It was the best of all the weapons from the 4th revolution.

That one cannon shot had pierced through the mother ship's electromagnetic shield completely, and the outer wall of the actual mother ship had a hole. Due to the issue of the small bullet and other technologies, the actual damage was a lot smaller than what

was described in theory. However, it was enough to critically damage the mother ship. The Requiem was short-circuited, and the electromagnetic layers started to dissipate. Plasmatic explosions were happening around the cannon's wound. Incidentally, the cannon shot had hit a key location, and even though there wasn't an actual explosion, it did deprive the alien the ability of using the Requiem.

Yao Yuan and the troopers rejoiced from this observation, but what happened next chilled them from head to toe.

It was an unbelievable scene. It was as if a giant, invisible hand was smoothing out the damage on the outer wall. With a swipe, the damage disappeared. It was as if the events earlier had never happened.

Not only that, under everyone's watchful eyes, the outer wall started to repair itself. It was hard to describe. Simply put, the outer walls were like human tissue, starting to mend and recuperate...

"Nano repair technology..."

Yao Yuan closed his eyes with a painful sigh. This was a technology that he was familiar with, and the full name was nano bot repair and recovery system.

The supposed nano bots weren't exactly robots that were nanosize, they were extremely small mechanical marvels that could perform humanly impossible tasks. The idea behind this

technology had been raised back when they were still on Earth, or during 3rd revolution. Yao Yuan remembered a lot of research had been done on this technology. In other words, the burgeoning of this technology was way back in the late 3rd revolution.

However, the 3rd revolution era didn't have the necessary technological knowledge in fields like metallurgy, energy technology, or electronics to realize nano repair bot technology. The scientists were in agreement that this technology will not be realized during the 3rd revolution.

After the Hope gained the scientific knowledge from the junkyard civilization and entered the 4th revolution, they finally came into contact with actual usable nano bots. The nano bot was a crystalloid mechanical creation about 20 nanometers in size. It required metallurgy from the 4th revolution to be able to manufacture something so small. At the same time, with the arrival of the supermagnetic computers, mankind could create rudimentary AI, and the microchips could reach the size of nanometers and had functions equal to microchips that were several ten millimeters big from the 3rd revolution.

With the combination of many elements, the actual nano bot technology could be realized near the end of the 4th revolution.

The purpose of this technology was simple. The space merchants were giving us one of the examples. It could help with repairs of metallic devices and surfaces. Not only that, it could help with painless surgery. Instead of going through an operation, the nanobots could enter the human body through ingestion and fixed problems, like recovery of human issue, extrication of tumorous

cells, and so on, from within. In conclusion, the technology would be indispensable to the civilization.

For another example, if the Hope had enough materials and nano bots, the central mainframe could design a spaceship and the nanobots would magically build a spaceship using the materials. The whole process would look like they were 'growing' a spaceship out of thin air. For a civilization from the 3rd revolution or earlier, it would be something akin to a myth!

The space merchants' technological advancement was unconventional to say the least, but it was undeniable that they had access to a few technologies from the 5th revolution and plenty of others from the 4th revolution. The appearance of this nano repair bot technology completely undermined Yao Yuan's original plan of disabling the space merchants' power level by completely destroying its energy circuits.

The damage inflicted wouldn't be able to compete with the masses of repair nano bots. The nanobots were too small to snipe while they were protected by the electromagnetic shields. Their repair speed was incredibly fast as well. In less than 10 minutes, the holes on the wall and the ruined energy circuits were all as good as new. This was absolutely despairing for mankind.

Unless the Hope had a multitude of Supermagnetic Planet Annihilating Rail-Cannons or the perfect version of the supermagnetic orbit cannon, even with the space merchants standing still for mankind to take shots at them, mankind wouldn't be able to harm their mother ship. The repair speed was simply too fast...

"All hope is on your group now, Ying. We are unable to harm the mother ship from the outside. They are only slightly better than us technology-wise, but it has created a deep chasm that we were unable to cross. Your team is humanity's last hope... I leave everything in your hands."

After the nano bot completely repaired the aliens' mother ship, the electromagnetic layers appeared in front of the mother ship once more. Yao Yuan waited until the Requiem had almost finished charging before he took another shot at the mother ship's surface energy circuit. This again disabled the Requiem. This time, three Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets were sacrificed before the supermagnetic orbit cannon could escape the mother ship's detection...

With a bitter smile, Yao Yuan studied the sparks that were flying off the cannon. Even the edges of the seating base were coming loose. He understood that the next time he fired the cannon would be his death. Humanity had shown all its cards, and they were all failures. The only hope... the only hope left was Ying's team, the team that was inside the mother ship!

Speaking of which, Ying's team only had seven members left: Ying, Ebon, Liu Bai, Zhang Heng, Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, and another Survivor. The rest of the troopers had either sacrificed themselves or Ying had them stay behind to stall the pursuing alien troops. In other words, when they reached their destination, the unit had suffered a 70 percent loss!

After leaping through the walls and evading the enemy units, the

seven people finally reached the reactor room. However, before entering the area, they realized that around its perimeter were plenty of the weird siege machines, the ones the big-brained aliens used to launch mind-break attacks. They were all abandoned. This last line of defense should be held up by the big-brained aliens. They were right that with mankind's current technology, they were defenseless against the mind-break attacks. However, they failed to calculate the presence of two Thinkers who were not only immune to the mind-break attacks but were able to turn the attacks back onto the attackers. This was obviously out of the space merchants' expectations. 20 minutes were not enough for them to set up another line of defense, so after the big-brained aliens pulled back, the place was left undefended.

When the team entered the room, technological marvels that were beyond human comprehension entered their gazes. One of the most eye-grabbing was a gigantic plasmatic bottle that could convert nuclear energy into plasmatic form before transferring it out. The high-tech scene took their breaths away.

Of course, that didn't distract them from their actual mission. Many had been sacrificed for this one moment, so they needed to complete the mission...

To find out a way to destroy the reactors, to create a giant explosion, to bring all of the space merchants down with them to hell!

Chapter 250: The Last Sacrifice

This heart of the space merchants' mother ship based on size alone was already larger than the combined size of all of the polymerized reactors on the Hope. It could supply more than enough energy to support six Hopes. Of course, with such a large reactor amount, while the explosion it would create wouldn't necessarily melt the entirety of the mother ship, it would definitely melt one-third or even half of the ship, that much was certain.

In other words, everyone present would die in the explosion.

Of course, for members like Ebon and Liu Bai, dying for the sake of completing the mission was a point of honor, but if there was a possibility of survival while finishing the mission, that would be the best result.

Liu Bai looked at his atomic watch and said, "9 more minutes to the limit of our mission. So, what shall we do now? Neither one of us knows about the science behind this thing, so how do we create the largest explosion possible?"

Ebon aimed his Seiya Gun at the nearest reactor. "Why are you still hung up on that? It's not easy to get here, so let's start shooting. This baby still has one shot in it. Combined with your Gaussian rifles, I don't believe we can't create some fireworks!"

Ren Tao, who was standing beside him, sighed. "We can't do that, because the reactors have an auto-protective system. Even our 3rd revolution reactors had them, so of course these more

high-tech reactors do. If we follow your suggestion, the most it'll do is to cause leakage of nuclear energy, which might cause a temporary light-outs, but nothing else. Of course, if you're lucky, one of them might explode, but the explosion will be too small to actually cause harm to the mother ship."

Ebon felt pricked by Ren Tao's inflammatory words. When he thought to move towards Ren Tao, he felt Ying's hand on his shoulder. Then he heard Ying ask, "Ren Tao, you're familiar with things like this? We Black Star Unit members haven't received an energy room sabotage mission before, so if you have any information, tell us so that we can work on it together."

Ren Tao nodded before pointing at the large plasmatic bottle. "While I can't be sure what is the actual purpose of this device, my guess is it is some sort of plasmatic generator. After all, the space merchants have access to a number of 5th revolution technologies. According to the theoretical basis of industrial revolutions..."

Ying cut him off, "Get to the point, we don't have time for a lecture."

Ren Tao shrugged and continued, "Simply put, the higher the technological power, the greater the energy it requires. A simple theory. Prehistoric man only needed fire to roast meat, but with the advancement in technology, the energy source from a bonfire was no longer enough, so he needed coal, oil, and a greater energy source. This is why the mother ship has such a large energy room."

Ying and others nodded to show that they understood. Ren Tao continued, "Therefore, our solution from the beginning was

already conceptually wrong. First, there's no reason for us to create a massive explosion using the reactors, since it'll kill all of us. Furthermore, with just the few of us, it is impossible to convert all of the nuclear energy here into a nuclear bomb..."

Ebon sneered at him. "Stop distracting us with stories like this. I know full well what you're thinking. You're just a coward; you're afraid of death, aren't you? When you realized that the Hope and your precious sister were safe, you didn't want to die anymore, isn't that right?"

Ren Tao replied immediately, "That's right, I don't want to die anymore. Don't tell me that you all can't wait to die. I'm just giving you guys an alternative that may not require all of us to die, and if you don't like it, you can close your ears and shut your mouths!"

Ebon was instantly inflamed. He was ready to punch Ren Tao's face in. But the moment he took his first step, he heard a gun behind cocked behind him. Then he heard Ying say, "Ebon, do you intend to harm your ally? Is it safe for me to assume you're not under the aliens' mind-break attack? If you take one more step forward, I'll shoot you through the head, try me."

Ebon's body went rigid and he ultimately didn't take that first step. Instead, he turned around to look at Ying in the eyes and sighed. Right then, Liu Bai yelled, "We only have 8 minutes left, quick!"

Ying turned to Ren Tao. "Tell us your solution and its justification! You have 30 seconds!"

Ren Tao didn't dare to dawdle. "It's simple, there are plenty of plasma energy sources here. We can reroute the energy circuits to pool the plasmatic energy together. This will create a plasmatic explosion, which will then create a giant-scale plasmatic ocean. The energy imbalance will burn all the devices that use energy into a crisp or even melt them completely. Of course, the damage won't be as large as a nuclear explosion, but its range will be large enough to affect the entire mother ship, causing a massive blackout because all the energy supporting this ship will be lost!"

Ying nodded before asking, "What's the justification? Why shouldn't we just blow everything up with a nuclear explosion?"

"For profit!" Ren Tao replied, "The aim of a war is profit, and this time we've lost aplenty. Discounting the Hope, this unit alone has suffered the loss of more than ten Homo Evolutis. Who is going to be responsible for this loss? We can use a nuclear explosion to blow up the mother ship, but the war will be meaningless in the end. We won't be getting the space information, 5th revolution technology, nothing! This will be a meaningless war, a war for the sake of one. How is that profitable? Our men die for no reason! Better if we leave the space merchants completely defenseless and squeeze them for all they're worth! That is the best resolution to this war!"

When Ying heard all this, he finally nodded and said, "Then we shall follow your lead. Tell us what to do, and make it quick. If the preparations are not set up before the 5 minute countdown, we'll be using Ebon's solution and blow this place up!"

Ren Tao immediately turned to address the rest. "Then I need

everyone's help. What we need now is a large amount of energy circuits and conductors! Their sizes don't matter as long as they can conduct energy!"

Under Ren Tao's commands, the unit started cutting down, moving, and sawing through the circuits in the energy room. When they were finished, the original circuits were a complete mess. However, this mission did highlight Ren Tao's hidden capability. Even though he kept saying this was only a small project, the complexity of it befuddled many. If one didn't have the required expertise, it was impossible to come up with a plan as intricate as this on the fly. God knows how much knowledge Ren Tao had hidden behind that vacant expression of his. One might never find out unless there were more than enough high-stake situations that forced him to show it.

When the thing was completely set up, they only had almost 5 minutes left. Ren Tao turned to Ying and said, "All done. Now we only need to break this main circuit and this area will be converted into a plasmatic ocean. Without the superconductor that we have access to, the implosion of energy will corrode all their energy-consuming devices."

Ebon asked, in a hurry, "Then what are we waiting for?"

Ying also turned to Ren Tao, waiting for his answer.

Ren Tao shrugged. "Currently, we're at the energy pooling stage. The greater the energy pooled, the greater the damage it'll cause later. Furthermore, if we just leave it alone, after 3 minutes, it'll reach the threshold and explode on its own, so there's need for us

to worry. We can make use of these 3 minutes and get as far away as possible. Maybe we can make use of the motorcycle siege engines to increase the possibility of us getting out of here alive..."

Ebon gave him an 'I thought so' condescending look, but this time he didn't say anything. He turned to look at Ying, and the last remaining Survivor in their team started to shake.

Even if they were leaving this place, someone had to stay behind to guard over it. In case the alien army returned, the one person could set off the energy explosion manually. Or else the space merchants might be able to stop the device.

The last Survivor knew that the person had to be him because he was, objectively speaking, worth the least. Plus, all the previously abandoned soldiers were Survivors, so this time... it would be his turn.

"I'll stay."

Ying stood quietly, checking the bullets in his sniper rifle's cache. Then he turned to everyone else and said calmly, "I can't guarantee I will not set off the explosion before the designated 3 minutes, so if you want to have a chance at life, I suggest you leave now. I wish you all the best."

The unit was stunned. Under everyone's startled gazes, Ying sat down on the floor and removed his space helmet. Then he pulled from within a necklace. It was a simple jade necklace hanging from a red thread. The jade was muddy, probably a cheap one from

some random street stall. Ying looked at the jade in his palm and put it back into his space armor.

Liu Bai opened his mouth to say, "Ying, this..."

Ying looked right at them. "This is a mission! It is not my intention to abandon our previous teammates, it is for the sake of the mission, and this is the same. Ren Tao is right, humanity has lost too much to end up with another junkyard. I agree with his proposal, and now it is time for me to commit to this mission!

"I'm a sniper who can take down enemies from afar. My Seeker power allows me to sniff out enemy ambushes and set off the circuit whenever I feel the situation calls for it. I am the only one capable of holding off the enemies for 3 minutes in this team..."

"Therefore, this time..."

"It's my turn to stay!"

Chapter 251: Fire and Brimstone

It had been four minutes since the second shot had been taken by the supermagnetic orbit cannon. On the mother ship's surface, the damage was starting to get repaired. Witnessing the reparation speed, the nano repair bots were so much greater than mankind had expected.

Due to the small size of the nano bots, other than the necessary chips, it was impossible for them to contain internal power storage, so the power source of the bots had to come from outside.

This energy technology was part of the 4th revolution technology. Using the electromagnetic mesomeric effect, the energy was transferred to the nano bots in wave form. After receiving the waves of energy, they were internally converted to kinetic energy. In other words, as long as the mother ship's energy storage was not destroyed, the nano bots could be used indefinitely, and there was no need to worry about malfunction from lack of energy.

Materials for repair were even easily solved. The size of the mother ship was as large as a small planet. The damage done by the supermagnetic orbit cannon was nothing more than a few puncture wounds relative to the overall size of the mother ship. Therefore, the lack of repairing materials was not going to be an issue either. The only way to stop the space merchants was to damage the mother ship on a larger scale.

When the repair on the outer walls was completed, the electromagnetic layers started to solidify again. When the Requiem

showed itself once more in space, it would be time for the Hope to go down. It would take about 10 minutes for the charging to complete. In other words, humanity had less than 10 minutes to figure out a way for survival.

Yao Yuan leaped back into the supermagnetic orbit cannon, which was sparking all over the place. It looked like a piece of machinery that was going to explode at any moment. However, within it, Yao Yuan was uncannily calm.

He had done everything he could. He would not hesitate to fire this last shot if the situation asked for it. It wouldn't have mattered, but if it could buy Ying's group a few more minutes, then humanity might get an extension of hope. What other choice did he have? Give up? Even if the commander of humanity also surrendered, then truly humanity was doomed... What was the point of living then?

There would be none...

Therefore, no matter whether it was for the purpose of living or for the girl that he loved and had promised everything, he would have to stay in the cannon and fire the last shot when the last few minutes arrived.

Alas, maybe after all of their struggles, Ying's group would still fail and the Hope would be destroyed, or maybe the Hope would be destroyed before Ying's group succeeded in pulling the space merchants alongside them to hell, or maybe Ying's group would manage to be successful with the time bought by this third bullet...

Regardless of the outcome, he had stopped caring...

At this final moment of his life, Yao Yuan was the calmest he had ever been. No, a feeling of quietus might be more precise. His life passed by in front of his eyes, his life that began as a replacement, his encounter with the woman that taught him the meaning of love, the meaning of life, and the promises he had made...

Then the life he spent on the Hope, the ups and the downs, despair and joy, his encounter with Bo Li, the girl that was a decade younger than him. His heart pricked with pain because in the end, they were not destined to be together because of some frivolous reasons...

With Yao Yuan's Anima power, he could have come clean to Bo Li but at this final moment, but he didn't do so. For some reason, he was suppressed by guilt. He had not only killed her father and had made her cry. Events like these made him lose the courage to face her even though he might not have the chance after this...

Finally...

"What is life?"

Yao Yuan studied the electromagnetic layers that slowly solidified in the cosmos, and he smiled. He used his Seeker power to locate the energy circuit he wanted to find and marked the coordinates into the computer. The cannon moved and charging began.

"Indeed, what is life?

"The only reason I'm even in this world is to be his replacement. I loved her, but she was embroiled in misfortunes because of my love. Maybe it's because of the promise I made to her that I'm here, fighting to keep the meaning of my life going. Maybe that is life..."

Yao Yuan laughed self-deprecatingly. He had no idea he would be so sentimental when death was so close. It was so unlike himself... Perhaps man was truest to himself when death was imminent. It turned out he was pretty good with words. Maybe in an alternate universe, he would be a poet. Yao Yuan chuckled at his own joke.

At the moment the supermagnetic orbit cannon was going to fire its third and last shot...

The outer surface of the mother ship exploded in a series of lightning flashes. In that particular instance, the mother ship was like a giant, glowing ball of light, glowing so brightly that many watching had to shield their eyes. Yao Yuan could feel his heart beating violently. He struggled to keep his eyes open even though they were tearing up from the agitation. His Seeker power was activated to its maximum capacity to record everything in sight. The thing he was worried about the most did not happen, the space merchants didn't make use of this opportunity to fire Requiem.

Instead, the mother ship was disabled...

After the flash winded down, the energy circuits on the mother

ship's surface exploded almost simultaneously. Sparks and fire burst out spontaneously. It looked like a giant display of fireworks, blindingly beautiful. After the electromagnetic layers dissipated, the entire mother ship was in a state of inactivity.

Yao Yuan's eyes were so agitated by the bright glare that they couldn't stop tearing up, but it was hard to tell whether the tears were from the agitation or the sadness in his heart...

Time backtracked for 2 minutes...

Ying was sitting quietly on the metallic floor of the engine room. Around him was a spread of different heavy artillery, a Gaussian rifle, a sawblade, and an atomic watch. These were the things his teammates had left behind before they left. In the next 3 minutes, the whole area would be a plasmatic sea that would melt everything, including his bones. In other words, in the wide cosmos, the existence of this man named Ying would be completely wiped out!

Ying's heart was serene like usual, and he was as calm as ever. No matter whether he was killing enemies, executing captives, in warzones, combat training, or sacrificing the weak and defenseless, he was calm, almost to the stage of deterring human connection.

Human connection?

What was that?

Ying had no recollection of human connection. Since he was young, there was no warmth in his relationships with other people. He was brought up by his uncle and aunt, and thanks to them he had a roof over his head and food in his stomach. However, the way they treated him was like how they treated a piece of wood or a pet. There was no warmth in the eyes that regarded him.

What was human connection? He really didn't understand...

When he became older and moved back with his parents, he finally got a glimpse of human connection. Those eyes, his parents' eyes that caressed every inch of his face, were full of kindness and gentleness. He wished to be bathed in those gazes every day, but they disappeared after a short few months. After that, he had never seen that gaze ever again.

What remained were disgust, condescension, and even fear...

Human connection?

What was that?

That warmth that he missed when he was young returned when he became the toughest teen in his village. Everyone gave him a wide berth and no one dared to throw mud or rocks at him anymore. It was a warmth born out of security, the warmth that arose after he stabbed a few gangsters in the city and everyone looked at him with fear. Warmth was when he was sleeping alone in his military bunk with a gun by his side. That was the meaning

of warmth.

After that came the Black Star Unit...

Why would they trust him unconditionally? He only ended up there because he had nowhere else to go and had no other choice. Why would they trust him implicitly?

Against enemies, one must be vicious and take them out at the first moment, or there will be danger. Captives were unnecessary weight that would tie down the mission's process. They might even revolt during the critical juncture.

Ying knew that the only reason he could stay in this Black Star Unit, which occasionally reminded him of the way his parents used to look at him, was because he would complete his assigned missions no matter what. And if he failed, he would be forced to leave. Therefore, the mission came first, and failure was not an option. As long as there was a mission, it must be completed. Sacrificing the weak, the personnel not related to the mission, those were necessary if doing so could help complete the mission, because the mission was not allowed to fail...

After Ying beat down the third wave of the aliens' assault, he read the atomic watch in his hand. 6, 5, 4, 3...

"So, Black Star Unit is my home...

"The connection between the members was the thing I was

looking for my whole life and the reason I must stay in the team...

"Turns out, I do have a family..."

A plasmatic explosion swallowed the room and swept across the mother ship. Everything disappeared, melted by the plasmatic wave...

Chapter 252: Infiltrating the Space Merchants' Mother Ship!

After the space merchants' mother ship experienced such a drastic change, Yao Yuan snapped back into focus after several seconds. He abandoned the supermagnetic orbit cannon. After all, after the technology behind it was perfected, they could build as many of the cannons as they wanted. It didn't matter even if it was abandoned. Furthermore, it was in the middle of collapsing, so Yao Yuan had to get away from it as soon as possible.

After Yao Yuan returned to the Red Lightning, he used his Anima power to order the rest of the Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets to give the supermagnetic orbit cannon a wide berth. After about 10 seconds, the cannon exploded in a fiery blaze. Thankfully, by then, all of the combat jets were already far away enough that no one got hurt.

Simultaneously, Yao Yuan had recovered from the sudden melancholy. He used his Seeker power to study the mother ship. Other than the still bursting sparks, the mother ship seemed to have entered lockdown. There were no more electromagnetic shields, not even the appearance of more plate-shaped combat jets.

"Attention to all Prototype 003 Combat Jet pilots, move your jets closer to the mother ship. Stay in formation with leaders in the front and the Survivors at the back. Without my orders, no one is allowed to get too close to the mother ship!"

After Yao Yuan relayed the information, he steered the Red Lightning towards the mother ship. This time, his Diviner power

didn't tingle, but he couldn't afford to be not careful. The Red Lightning had entered its maximum speed and was dashing towards the mother ship in a flash of red lightning. It eventually stopped several kilometers outside of the mother ship. It made a quick swerve practically just outside of the mother ship and there were no signs of any attack.

Indeed, the space merchants' mother ship had been completely disabled!

"Attack! Every trooper in Prototype 003 Combat Jets, attack! Attack with everything you got!"

With this observation, Yao Yuan ordered them to launch a full-on assault.

Very quickly, the remaining 100 plus combat jets started attacking. The roaring of the Gaussian rail guns never stopped. Interspersed in between was Yao Yuan's own Gaussian mini cannon. The surface of the mother ship proceeded to be shot into pieces.

After a series of attacks, Yao Yuan ordered the troopers to change tactics. After all, the mother ship was gigantic, so it would take years for the combat jets to be able to do any real damage to it. Even though the Gaussian weaponry had great penetration, they weren't carrier missiles, they were like mosquito bites on the mother ship.

At that time, it had been 3 minutes after the mother ship went

down. Yao Yuan had finally figured it out. He immediately used his Anima power to locate Xi Kong inside the Hope and had her contact Guang Zhen and Bo Li.

"Tell Guang Zhen to immediately gather all the Defense Unit soldiers he can find. Of course, leave some for necessary defense. The rest of the defense responsibility can be left to the Black Dragons. Get all the Defense Unit soldiers into a transport shuttle. Right, also bring along around 5 Black Dragons. Use Bo Li's alien robot to carry them out. After they leave the Hope's creator's particle range, it will be time for action! Tell them to go towards the space merchants' mother ship!"

Xi Kong was unfamiliar with military events, so she delayed Yao Yuan's orders word for word to Guang Zhen and Bo Li. Guang Zhen was initially curious as to why Yao Yuan hadn't directly communicated with him but he was quick to realize that unlike Xi Kong's, Yao Yuan's Anima power couldn't reach the non-Homo Evolutis. Therefore, he quickly tossed the confusion out of his mind.

Since it was Yao Yuan's orders, Guang Zhen quickly moved to oblige. In a short amount of time, he gathered all of the Defense Unit's lieutenant leaders and they started to calculate the amount of still active Defense Unit soldiers. Other than the ones who had sacrificed themselves, those that were still unconscious from the aliens' electrical attacks, and those that were injured, they currently could gather around 1,200 soldiers. It was a saddening number.

As noted in Yao Yuan's orders, Guang Zhen left behind 200

soldiers and 15 Black Dragons to look over the Hope, while the remaining 1,000 soldiers and 5 Black Dragons were led into the transport shuttles. After that, Bo Li's alien robot lifted the shuttles one by one beyond the confinement of the Hope's creator's particle zone. After that, the shuttles recovered their functionality and started to fly towards the Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets.

Yao Yuan's Red Lightning zipped towards the shuttles and he finally regained contact with Guang Zhen. Guang Zhen asked, immediately after communication was established, "What's the update? Yao Yuan, why are we going towards the alien merchants' mother ship?"

Yao Yuan answered, "Because we don't have enough firepower to take down the entire mother ship. Furthermore, it is not in our interest to destroy it. As you can see, the mother ship has been completely disabled, as its energy circuits and energy systems seem to have short-circuited. This is an opportunity that we can't miss. We shall take advantage of this chaos and send in our troops to seize their mother ship..."

"We've lost so much in this war, and until now we haven't heard anything from Ying's group, and we probably won't anymore. Regardless, the mother ship's shut down has completely taken away the space merchants' will to fight, so they're at a disadvantage. Now is the perfect time to attack. Ol' Wong, you'll lead the troops into the mother ship and split into 5 units to take hold of strategic location. Each of the units will have a Black Dragon accompanying it. The goal is to set up a bridgehead within their mother ship."

Yao Yuan took a pause before continuing, "Us Black Star Troopers will aid in the combat as well. I will give you half of the Troopers to act as the shock troopers to take down and decimate the alien merchants' military resistance. We have to expand our control on their mother ship as much as we can. What to do next will be decided after we gain contact with the space merchants."

Guang Zhen was taken aback. "Gain contact? What contact? Why?"

Yao Yuan answered firmly, "Of course, for peace talks."

Guang Zhen immediately retorted, "Peace talks? Have you lost your mind? Yao Yuan, you want us to have peace talks with the alien merchants? What is the meaning of this? Do you know how many lives have been lost on the Hope? Do you know that our three spaceships have self-destructed? Are you aware that the Hope is still immobile and is shut down? You seriously want to have peace talks?"

"Indeed, we need to have this peace talk..."

Yao Yuan confirmed, "Because we can't completely take down the alien merchants. Our current advantage is not a really big advantage, so we're still in risky waters. This infiltration of the mother ship is also to gain some leverage for the peace talks. You too have seen how things were when the supermagnetic orbit cannon was fired. The mother ship has access to nano repair bot technology..."

Guang Zhen gave it some thought and nodded. "I know, Bo Li gave me a brief on it when we saw the mother ship start to repair itself."

"That's right," Yao Yuan continued. "We might have an advantage now, but it'll be useless if we don't turn that into a victory. The moment the alien merchants regain their senses and pull out some emergency energy supply to reactivate the nano bots, then what will happen? Maybe it'll take several days or even weeks to fully repair their mother ship, but do you think we can control the whole mother ship in a short period of time? Impossible.

"We don't have the military force to seize the whole mother ship. After the mother ship comes back online, the space merchants can keep it on lock down to prevent our entry. What if they start to charge up the Requiem again? How are we supposed to defend against that? The quantum lock in the Hope's central mainframe cannot be resolved in a short period of time, so we will need the space merchants' technology for that..."

Yao Yuan took a deep breath. "Of course I realize the extent of the damage the space merchants have done. After tricking us under the disguise of trade, killing them all will not compensate for what we've lost. They will have to pay for the lives that they have taken. However, Ol' Wong, politics is politics. Even though you and I might not like it, politics is a part of war. We can't fight a war simply because of our emotions, because if so, this whole war has no meaning! The reason we go into war is only one... profit!

"Based on everything so far, peace talks will bring us the greatest

profit. It will provide us with the benefits we need and take away the danger we're in..."

Yao Yuan's tone suddenly dropped. "Of course, this peace talk will not be built on faith alone. That way, we will not get the benefit we deserve! The so-called peace talks can only exist when the space merchants are under the mouths of our cannons! Other than setting up the bridgehead, I want the soldiers to decimate their remaining military and capture more captives! After I escort you guys to the mother ship's hangar, I will return to the Hope and have Bo Li's alien robot send to me all the H-bombs that still remain on the Hope!

"Since the space merchants have already pushed us to the point of extinction, if they still refuse to bow down to our conditions, then their mother ship will become a fireworks display in space. I'd rather we spent decades here sifting through the quantum lock than give these space locusts another chance to wiggle their way out of their responsibility and repayment. If they are that stubborn...

"Then they shall have a taste of the H-bombs!"

Chapter 253: Attack!

Very quickly, the transport shuttles were directed to the mother ship with the Prototype 003s' protection. They headed towards the holes that were made on the walls and entered the mother ship through them.

The inside of the mother ship had fared slightly better. Electrical circuits and devices were sparking all over the place. However, other than the few spots where the damage was especially serious, most of the area suffered nothing more than a few burnt circuits. Generally speaking, there wasn't much danger.

Even though the Defense Unit soldiers weren't wearing space armors, they still had on uniform space combat suits. These were already the fourth edition combat suits. If taken back to 3rd revolution Earth, this suit would be stronger than any bullet-proof outfit on Earth. Even sniper rifles wouldn't be able to pierce through it, much less common bullets. Even with tank cannon, the person would only die from the vibration and the combat suit would remain unharmed.

This version of space combat suit came with internal energy storage, so it could create an electromagnetic shield. Defense against common firearms like Gaussian rifles was available. Of course, its defense against heavy artillery was still lacking. Then again, it wasn't part of the plan for Defense Unit soldiers to be involved in classified missions. They had always used their advantage in numbers and firepower to overpower their enemies, so this space combat suit was more than enough to serve that purpose.

Just like that, 1,000 Defense Unit soldiers entered the space merchants' mother ship. Under Guang Zhen's leadership, they were divided into five units. The units weren't able to connect with each other because the mother ship was in a state of shut down, meaning they were all covered by creator's particle.

It had been years since mankind had received this technology from the junkyard civilization, so they had come up with a solution to this kind of problem. It was something akin to a signal relay station, a mini creator's particle isolator so to speak. It could undo the effect of creator's particle within a certain radius. Even though the area covered was small and it could only last for twelve hours before it required a change of battery or completely malfunctioned, it was fairly cheap to produce and almost every Defense Unit soldier was equipped with one.

Without wasting any time, the five units were formed. Other than the main unit, which was led by Guang Zhen, the rest of the four units each brought along a Black Dragon and spread out to explore the mother ship. Simultaneously, signal relay stations were set up at regular intervals. That way, information from all the units could be compiled at the main unit's location. The main unit therefore had set up a basic defense barricade and a computer server to monitor and analyze the war situation.

The Defense Unit pressed forward according to training procedures. Not long after that, about 50 Black Star Troopers under Yao Yuan's command also entered the mother ship. They arrived at Guang Zhen's side and their command was given to non-Homo Evolutis who were wearing space armors similar to theirs.

Guang Zhen didn't stand on courtesy, he immediately arranged for 30 troopers to go assist a soldier unit who was ambushed by the alien merchants' military. The enemy unit was a mechanized siege unit. Currently, the Defense Unit's troop was in hiding, and progress was halted because this was not a hurdle they could pass with just the support of one Black Dragon.

The 30 Black Star Troopers arrived at the scene swiftly. Under Guang Zhen's command, the 30 troopers and Defense Unit soldiers launched a surprise attack. The one at the front line was, of course, the Black Dragon. The result was out of everyone's expectations. Once this siege unit, which had impressive-looking vehicles, saw the 30 Black Star Troopers storming their way in, they started to turn and run. The bigger siege machines, which had trouble turning, were completely abandoned. The alien pilots climbed out and joined the retreating party. The battle was concluded with the aliens deserting and not firing even a bullet!

Just like that, the 30 troopers and 200 Defense Unit soldiers managed to capture about 200 aliens. 40 of them even committed suicide.

After confirming they wouldn't be able to run, they committed suicide after being captured.

This was unbelievable. The aliens not only had regrettable fighting spirit, they were also extremely afraid of mankind. After they saw the 30 Black Star Troopers and 200 Defense Unit soldiers charge at them, they didn't even dare to retaliate. They pretty much allowed themselves to be captured, and after capture, they

decided to commit suicide. What kind of logic was this?

This curious development was immediately reported to Guang Zhen, and it befuddled him. He too couldn't figure out the logic behind this. Logically speaking, a lack of fighting spirit meant a fear of death, and since there was fear of death, it would deter suicide. If they had the courage to commit suicide, why didn't they use it to fight back?

Guang Zhen had a Black Star Trooper take a Prototype 003 Space Combat Jet and report this information back to Yao Yuan. After receiving the update, Yao Yuan rushed to the ready bridgehead and started discussing it with Guang Zhen.

"...Indeed, this doesn't make sense from a logical standpoint, but it is not completely unexplainable either..."

Yao Yuan used his Thinker power and explained, "It is quite likely they've stumbled into human Black Star Troopers, or probably Ying's group, earlier, or they are unable to differentiate between the Black Star Troopers and Defense Unit soldiers. After all, Ying's group was only 10 to 20 people in size and they managed to take down the energy core of this mother ship. I don't believe that it was a covert operation either. This means that they must have taken down a sizeable amount of alien soldiers along the way before they reached their destination. Plus, you too are familiar with Ying's disposition..."

Understanding dawned on Guang Zhen's face. "You know what, you're probably right. I've told Ying many times, but if it was him leading the team, he would not leave the captives alive. There was

probably a massacre as well. From the looks of things, the aliens are highly traumatized by the Black Star Trooper's combat capability and probably Ying's bloodlust as well. That must have sown the fear in their hearts. If viewed from this perspective, then their actions of committing suicide even after being captured can be understood."

Yao Yuan nodded. "Indeed, but this is a good advantage for us as well. In terms of war, the first thing we need to combat is the issue of psychology. Since the aliens are afraid of us, why not make use of this weakness? Let's take a look at the captives we have. Find a few that are willing to surrender and lead us to the nearest important locales or secret cores or to meet with the alien merchants' higher executives. Along the way, if we run into more alien units, we can use the captives as a bridge of communication, to present them with a choice. If they want to fight, then their deaths will be gruesome after capture, but if they surrender, I will make sure we will not harm their lives and will not torture them."

Guang Zhen nodded along, but he hesitated when Yao Yuan mentioned massacre. "Are we really going to give gruesome deaths for those that resist, or is that just a scare tactic?"

Yao Yuan answered with a chilling tone, "Of course it is for real! Any alien unit that dares to resist us humans will be slaughtered after they are captured! If not, how are we going to convince the rest that we are going to stick to our word? Why should we repay their aggression with kindness? This is a tipping point for us. Whether we can get our forces deep into the mother ship to secure strategic locations for negotiations later on hinges on this very moment. So why are you still hesitating?"

Guang Zhen seemed to be unconvinced. After all, a veteran Heaven's Group soldier like himself was emotionally scarred by events like massacres...

"This is an order!" Yao Yuan had no choice but to pull ranks.

Guang Zhen immediately saluted and replied, "Sir, yes, Sir!"

Just like that, the 4 Defense Unit soldiers powered on with the aid of 10 Black Star Troopers each. With the troopers and Black Dragon leading the charge, the infiltration speed gained a tremendous increase. At the same time, all the alien soldiers and civilian captives were sent over to Guang Zhen's bridgehead.

Guang Zhen started to form a unit that would lead mankind deeper into the mother ship. Using the computer to translate human language into the junkyard aliens' language, he tried to select volunteers from the alien captives. However, it seemed like some of the captives even understood human language. To increase the efficiency of this leading group, Guang Zhen even promised those that volunteered that he would not only ensure their safety but also the safety of three of their friends. The human military would not harm them.

Unsurprisingly, many of the aliens volunteered; not only the civilians, but also the soldiers. At that moment, Guang Zhen saw a new face of the alien merchants. They seemed to have weak or even no loyalty to their race, country, or team; they would turn on their own should the situation become too high-pressured.

Just as Guang Zhen sent off the leading unit to join mankind's military, Xi Kong had managed to locate Liu Bai, Ebon, Zhang Heng, Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, and the last remaining Survivor wandering through the space merchants' mother ship.

And Ying...

Was ascertained to be dead!

Chapter 254: Prediction

The progress of the Defense Unit was smooth. With the Black Star Troopers and the Black Dragons leading the frontline, mankind was practically unstoppable.

However, it has to be said that the space merchants' mother ship was simply too big, so much so that seizing it with only 1,000 plus soldiers was preposterous. 24 hours after infiltrating the mother ship, the main unit commanded by Guang Zhen had gathered about 30,000 alien captives. It was the limit, as 200 plus people looking after 30,000 captives was too much.

Under these circumstances, Guang Zhen's sharp instinct was singing in alarm. Therefore, he immediately ordered the 4 exploratory units to stop and wait for new orders and provisions.

Now, we shall turn to describe the situation within the mother ship.

The internal part of the mother ship looked old, but the designs were all complicated, reflecting the technological level of the 4th revolution. For example, the surface of the mother ship was broken by Prototype 003 Space Combat Jets into holes, and even though the mother ship had lost its main power source, quarantine walls were dropped to prevent the air inside the mother ship from being drawn out into space.

The air within the mother ship was not compatible for human consumption either because it had a substance that was poisonous

to the human body. Therefore, whether it was the Defense Unit soldiers or Black Star Troopers, they required an external supply of air, food and water, and a good homeostatic system within their space suits.

When mankind entered the 4th revolution, there was a new technology to aid with supply provisions in space. It was something like a mobile isolated capsule. It could fit 10 people at once, when inside they could eat, rest, sleep, and recharge the energy and air in their spacesuits. Currently, the Hope had about 30 of them in stock. In the case of 1,000 Defense Unit soldiers and several hundred Troopers, it could only satisfy one-third of their necessities, but it was still better than none.

Furthermore, they were in the middle of a war, so they couldn't have all the soldiers rest at the same time. At least half of the military force had to be ready to guard the captives. So one-third was fine since the military could use the capsules in rotation.

Using Bo Li's alien robot, the capsules on the Hope were slowly transported to the Prototype 003 Combat Jets that waited outside the Hope before being carried to the bridgehead on the space merchants' mother ship. With Black Star Troopers as manual labor, the capsules were transported to the lieutenants of the four exploratory units. In the next 24 hours, the soldiers finally had the chance to enjoy a hot meal, and some went down for a nap. Of course, two-thirds of the military was still on active duty.

This was preparation for a long, drawn out battle.

Of course, not all units received this arrangement, because the

unit personally led by Yao Yuan was searching the mother ship for Liu Bai's group. Using his Anima power, he brought along 30 Black Star Troopers to try to reconnect with these straggling heroes.

Liu Bai's group, by that time, had reached their limits.

It was not because of enemy soldiers, because when Ying blew up the reactors and caused the massive blackout on the mother ship, the enemy military had practically disbanded. The space merchant troops started deserting when they came across the six of them. The thing that really pushed them to the limit was the fact that their space armors were running dangerously low on juice.

The Black Star Space Armor had within it a large storage of energy, but since it had within it the oxygen circulatory system, creator's particle isolator, and many other body enhancement systems, its power consumption rate was enormous as well. After all, the six of them had survived plenty of battles, and those exhausted plenty of their energy supply. If they didn't recharge in the next 2 to 3 hours, these 6 would die from asphyxiation from the shutdown of the oxygen circulatory system.

However, by then Yao Yuan had reached them with his Anima power and had informed them that the larger army was infiltrating the mother ship. Therefore, Yao Yuan requested them to stop moving, to preserve the energy that they had while waiting for Yao Yuan to reach them.

The six followed his orders and stayed put. With nothing else to do, they started chatting.

"...So Ying is dead," Liu Bai observed with a sigh.

The other 5, who were trading interesting stories about things that happened on the Hope, were silenced when Liu Bai said this sentence.

Ebon parted his lips to add, "I thought that guy would be the one among us to live the longest. I still remember during a mission back on Earth where we were tasked to assassinate a Xinjiang split-support. The target was in a heavily guarded area. Other than the main entrance, the rest of the place was laid with landmines, and since this was overseas, we couldn't send in our troops. Ying volunteered to enter the area with a single sniper rifle. A few days later, the news came out that the target had been eliminated, and Ying hadn't suffered a single injury on his body. And to think a person who was capable of achieving miracles like that has truly left us..."

Solemnity weighed down on everyone's hearts. Regardless of how each of them viewed Ying's personality, he was an undeniable hero; not a personal hero, but a hero to the entire human race. If not for his contribution, they might not even have gotten through the defenses set up by the space merchants, much less had the chance to counter-engineer the plasmatic bottles. He died a heroic death. At that moment, they had nothing but respect and reverence for this human hero.

Breaking the silence, Liu Bai suddenly turned to the last Survivor. "By the way, soldier, which Black Star platoon are you from and what's your name?"

The trooper quickly tried to stand up right and give a salute, but due to thirst and starvation, he could only manage a half salute. "Reporting, Sir. I am from the 6th platoon, and my name is Ran Zhu Yi."

"Ran? The surname of one of the Chinese ancient kings? Interesting," Ebon, who was sitting beside him, commented.

Zhu Yi answered immediately, "Yes, it is that character, Ran. Zhu from bamboo [Zhu Zi] and Yi from loyalty [Yi Qi], Ran Zhu Yi."

Liu Bai commented, "No need to be so cautious, we're combat buddies now. In this war, the Black Star Troopers probably suffered the loss of at least one or two platoons. We're not even sure how many of us we've lost on the Hope..." Liu Bai sighed. "Black Star Troopers are comprised of all Homo Evolutis, but we still have no clue how to increase the number of Homo Evolutis. After the great losses suffered in this war, who knows how long this Black Star Troopers unit as a whole will be able to survive for."

Xiao Niao piped up, "Speaking of which, the understanding behind the trigger for the birth of Homo Evolutis is still iffy. Thus far, there have been two times when there was a large scale awakening of Homo Evolutis. The first was right after we left Earth, and the second was when we arrived at the New Planet. I initially thought leaving the New Planet would instigate another awakening, but obviously I was wrong. Looks like my understanding of Homo Evolutis triggers is wrong..."

To everyone's surprise, Ren Tao retorted weakly, "That might not be true, because there might be things that happened without us noticing..." As he was talking, there was hollow ringing voice coming from within his space armor. Under everyone's curious gazes, a snow-white baby Black Dragon peeped out of Ren Tao's helmet. It was the little creature that was responsible for the earlier ringing sound.

"The little thing must be hungry. Hopefully, he can hold on and not chew on my body." Ren Tao saw the creature and started laughing.

Right then, intrigue crossed Xiao Niao's eyes. He questioned, "By the way, Ren Tao, I've been meaning to ask you, but the situation before didn't allow it. Where did this baby Black Dragon come from? Why would you bring this baby dragon with you when we were told we are going on a negotiation meeting with the space merchants? Did you predict they would turn on us? No, impossible, because even so, you wouldn't have thought to bring along this baby dragon. There is no logical connection between the two!"

This reminded everyone else of this curiosity. Indeed, this baby dragon had pretty much saved the whole of humanity. If he hadn't bitten away the metallic hands, their unit wouldn't have escaped capture, and the series of events after that wouldn't have happened. The key to their victory was actually this baby dragon!

Ren Tao shrugged. "That is why I said there might be things that happened without us noticing. Xiao Niao, what is your opinion on the concept of time, or to be more precise, what do you think about

fortune-telling?"

Xiao Niao was startled by this sudden question. He thought about it and answered, "Fortune-telling is an enterprise that requires a lot of information collection and using that information to come up with the most logical extrapolation..."

"No, that's not what I meant. I mean seeing into the future or knowing what will happen in the future, like the concept of chaos theory. To borrow a simple analogy, there are one thousand pebbles in a box, and each of them has a number written on it. The numbers are not repetitious, and you have to pull one out of the box. Can you use mathematical theories to predict the number written on the pebble you pull out?"

Xiao Niao hesitated before answering, "Impossible, there simply too many variables to be able to come up with a logical conclusion..."

Ren Tao chuckled and pointed at the baby dragon by the side of his head, saying, "Well, someone did..."

"That is why I said, we might have encountered a new change that we didn't even realize!"

Chapter 255: Conversation and Time!

Yao Yuan personally led Liu Bai's group back to the bridgehead where Guang Zhen was. When Yao Yuan found them, the six were at their physical limits, and their space armors had barely enough energy left to run the most basic of systems. Even after an emergency energy recharge, the six barely had energy left to speak. Yao Yuan's unit had no choice but to carry the six of them to the resting capsules, and hot meals proved to be the most effective medicine of all.

Simultaneously, the interrogation with the alien captives was still going on. Other than questioning them on issues like the location of their higher authority, the key locations of their mother ship, and the structure of their military, mankind also focused on the issues of the quantum lock affecting the Hope.

However, in the interrogation process, the interrogators stumbled across a curious observation. It appeared like among these alien civilians, about half of them had a stunted intelligence growth...

Yes, it seemed unlikely, but these aliens appeared to suffer to mental retardation. They showed a lack of basic understanding of normal questions and had trouble forming coherent thoughts.

This went against the common portrayal of aliens in human sci-fi. The aliens in the medium were always a species that had higher IQ than humanity. Even the children had high intelligence. This was derived from the understanding of the evolution theory. Since they had evolved to a stage where they could enter space, their

technological level couldn't be lower than mankind's, thus their intelligence couldn't be lower than mankind's.

However, the reality was, among these civilian alien captives, at least one-third of them showed evidence of mental retardation. In this situation, either they were really retarded or they were faking it, but why do it on such a giant scale? One or two pretending to be retarded would make sense, but one-third of the whole population...? Or did they think mankind was retarded?

This observation quickly reached Guang Zhen's ears. At that moment, Yao Yuan was resting in the capsule, so Guang Zhen quickly had someone wake up him to relay to him the information.

Yao Yuan was bewildered by this development. He too had no clue what this represented, but seeing is believing, so he quickly rushed to the interrogation point to observe for himself. As he had been told, a large number of the alien captives did showcase a lack of intelligence. Even the simplest of questions, they had difficulties in answering. This whole thing was just weird.

"What about those with normal intelligence? Did you ask them why there are so many retards?" Yao Yuan asked Guang Zhen.

Guang Zhen nodded. "We did, but the answers we got were confusing, to say the least... They said that these aliens were born on the mother ship after they left shelter, so this level of intelligence was to be expected. They also mentioned that the mother ship has a population of about two million and the number has to do with the newborns. Honestly, I have no clue what they were talking about."

Yao Yuan too was befuddled. He thought about it and said, "How long have I been resting?"

Guang Zhen looked at the time inside his space armor and answered, "You've been asleep for about 6 hours. You should take some more rest."

"That's not necessary." Yao Yuan shook his head. "This means that Ren Tao and Xiao Niao have been resting for about 10 hours. Have someone go wake them up and get some food in their stomachs. Then tell them to meet us here. Also, grab one of the big-brained aliens for interrogation, one with normal intelligence. I will interrogate it personally to find out what is happening on this ship."

Under Yao Yuan's orders, Ren Tao and Xiao Niao, who were soundly sleeping, were pulled out of their dreams and pretty much sleep-walked to the bathroom. After taking in some food, they put on their space armors and rushed to the interrogation point where Yao Yuan and Guang Zhen were already waiting.

"...That's the current situation. I have a feeling there is a giant secret behind all this, and it might have many things to do with the nature of these shelters, like what qualifies a location as a valid shelter? This is the information we need. I've woken the two of you up because we will be interrogating a military officer, one of those big-brained aliens. I need the both of you to analyze its meaning and details." Yao Yuan didn't hesitate to reveal everything to the two.

The two were confused by the sudden info dump. They too couldn't understand the connection between the so-called newborns and the shelter. Why would aliens that born outside of shelters become retarded? Could it be that the aliens were species that required specific nutrients to aid with development when they were born and these nutrients were only available at the shelter? But this hypothesis didn't sound right either...

Furthermore, for such a massive mother ship to only have a population of two million was rather unbelievable!

However, thinking back to when they cut through the mother ship under Ying's leadership, even though they put down at least ten thousand aliens, in relative to the actual size of the mother ship, that number was curiously small. Compared to the junkyard civilization, which had more than one billion citizens, the space merchant population was indeed curious.

Could this be some unique situation?

The two brushed off their drowsiness and followed Yao Yuan and Guang Zhen into the interrogation room where a big-brained alien was being held captive.

The big-brained alien looked relatively calm, but it might be hunger or drowsiness because it looked rather pale. Yao Yuan cut straight to the point and had the soldier in the room translate his words into the junkyard civilization's language. "I'm not going to waste time going in circles. You and your entire civilization are currently our captives. We want to ask you some questions, and if you refuse to answer or purposely provide us with the false

information, then you will die. Therefore, if you want to live and want to keep your people alive, you better answer our questions truthfully."

The big-brained alien let out a sound that was in between a laugh and a sigh. It replied, "Ask whatever you want. After your military boarded our mother ship, I know our fate was already written on the wall. We admit ours loss, so I will no longer lie to you."

Yao Yuan exchanged a glance with the three others. He then went back to the big-brained alien. "First, I want to know why your race, or rather the future generations of the other races on this ship, suffer from mental retardation."

The big-brained alien widened its eyes and looked at the people in the room curiously. It then suddenly let out the curious laugh again. "So, it is really a misunderstanding..."

Yao Yuan and the rest were even more confused. He quickly followed up, "What do you mean by that?"

The big-brained alien pointed at Ren Tao and Xiao Niao, saying, "Before the mother ship's main energy core was blown up, didn't the both of you ask some of my people why we attacked you? That was the two of you, right?"

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao looked at each other before nodding. Ren Tao explained, "That's right. When your people used the mind-breaker attack on us, there was a mental link, so we managed to gather some information from your mind, but we were unable to

be certain, so we posed the question then and tried to convince you all that this was a misunderstanding."

The big-brained alien continued, "The physical bodies of the people of my race are rapidly regressing, but in contrast, our brains are incredibly complex and eventually developed mastery in the field of psychic control. According to the records left behind by my ancestors, my race came from a comfortable planet, and due to the advancement in technology, a lot of robots were invented to replace our manual labor. That was when my race's physical bodies started to regress and intelligence started to improve. However, with the continued advancement in AI, the robots' internal program started to achieve Singularity and overwrote the rules of robotics. They eventually captured my ancestors and kept them as pets or farm animals. They were given plenty of food and care, but they were allowed zero freedom and no communication between each other, even though my ancestors were still referred to as their 'masters'."

For some inexplicable reasons, the big-brained alien started to go into its racial history, but since humanity didn't have much knowledge about the evolution of space civilizations, they didn't stop it. These were all useful details. They recorded them down quietly.

"Under such circumstances, my ancestors spent about 100 years in captivity in a stage where even reproduction became mechanized, artificial mating. My ancestors eventually developed a prowess in the psychic field and managed to form a spiritual link between each other. Then, under the guidance of the Great Prophet, my ancestors managed to nab the first victory against the first grade AI robots, or more specifically, the victory for a great

escape. My ancestors finally got out of our home planet, and that was about 18,000 years ago...

"Therefore, when you conversed with my clansman, the words he spoke and the things he heard and saw, every single one of us from my race could hear and see it..."

The big-brained alien suddenly looked at the humans present in the room. "The misunderstanding happened about 246 years ago when we stumbled across a small, human space ship..."

Chapter 256: Conservation of Life

246 years ago? This was a crazy revelation.

Needless to say, it shocked everyone present. After all, the Hope had left Earth only for decades. 246 years ago? Mankind had barely reached the first industrial revolution then, how was it possible that the space merchants had stumbled across humanity in space?

If this was 246,000 years ago, then perhaps it wouldn't be such a shock. After all, it could be a completely different alien race that looked similar to humans, or prehistoric human races with super tech. But 246 years ago? A human spaceship was impossible then!

However, there was no harm in listening on, or at least that was what everyone thought.

The big-brained alien continued, "I remember it was around the Orpheus Nebula, and our main trading target was a level 3 space civilization. We were responsible for transporting their necessary resources, and in return they traded with us their victory spoils. However, regrettably, the pillage target at the time, the Shelter from the other side, was well-guarded, so there weren't many spoils. The war had been going on for too long, so we decided to venture to a new location. There we stumbled across a tiny spaceship.

"The spaceship still had various qualities of a Level 1 Space Civilization. It had about 7,400 plus people, and when they entered our creator's particle range, their spaceship immediately shut

down. Of course, since we are merchants and not pillagers or destroyers, we eventually deactivated our creator's particle and started to establish communication for trade.

"There was no habitable planet within a few light-years of where we were, so we reached a consensus that this was a spaceship most likely abandoned by a larger colony or it was unfortunate enough to encounter a space catastrophe. Since our original trade kind of fell apart, we decided to trade with this small spaceship..."

Here, the big-brained alien halted, as if weighing something in its mind.

Yao Yuan waited for a moment before urging the alien to continue. "Well, what happened next?"

The big-brained alien continued, "Then we realized that they had 6 Cosmic Adapters on this spaceship. This was a bargain beyond our imagination, so we started to plot for these 6 Cosmic Adapters..."

Guang Zhen scoffed, "And the claws show. In times of peace, you're merchants, but when there is profit, the merchants become burglars. When the Homo Evolutis, or what you call the Cosmic Adapters, were identified, you would seize them shamelessly. For shame."

The big-brained alien looked at Guang Zhen curiously. "Why would you say that? Shouldn't we seize Cosmic Adapters whenever we can? Is there any reason not to?"

Guang Zhen was speechless. This was like a burglar who had stolen your money, and after being detained, argued that stealing was his profession, so why should he be punished for his occupation? It was an illogical argument.

The big-brained alien ignored Guang Zhen. "However, this race was highly suspicious. When they realized that we were attempting to snatch their Cosmic Adapters, they initiated their spaceship's self-destruct sequence. If we continued to press, they would self-destruct. So we had no choice but to revert to normal trade and eventually promised to trade with them our level 2 space civilization technology.

"The whole trade process was complicated; we had not seen such a troublesome race before. Any single one of them could come up with logic that we couldn't refute. In the end, we ended up with an atrociously bad trade. For six Cosmic Adapters, we gave them all our level 2 civilization technology, some from level 3, space navigation charts, the coordinates of our Shelter, large amounts of cosmic information, many radioactive ores, and materials.

"That wasn't enough for this race. They wanted us to first pass them all our information and materials before giving us the six Cosmic Adapters. After an internal discussion, we decided to follow their proposed trading program. After all, this was a small spaceship from a level 1 space civilization, so we weren't afraid of them running.

"Alas..."

Yao Yuan and the gang answered in unison, "They disappeared before your eyes."

The big-brained alien wasn't surprised. He continued, "That they did, along with all our trading chips. This was beyond our wildest dreams. We had given them so much and got nothing in return. This has never happened before. The few main negotiators were frozen and made into supplies when we returned to Shelter. I can still remember how angry our executives were..."

Yao Yuan had a follow-up. "And then? 200 plus years later, you met us and you thought we were that small spaceship's future generation?"

The alien looked at him curiously. "Future generation? No, we thought you people were the same bunch, but this time you put forth more Cosmic Adapters to swindle us even more. Is 246 years a long time? Why would you think we assumed you were the future generation?"

Yao Yuan's group had too many things they had to discuss among themselves. He quickly ordered a soldier to escort the alien out and had someone bring the alien some food and water for it to rest, to prepare for the later interrogation.

"...First question's first, why 246 years? That would be the 18 or 19th century; did we even have a spaceship then? Furthermore, according to the alien's description, this small spaceship was probably the politicians that abandoned Earth before us, so why would it be 246 years ago?" Yao Yuan asked the moment the alien was led out of the room.

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao were confused by this as well. After a long time, Xiao Niao finally said, "The time is probably something only the Academy can answer, but the only possible answer is it has to do with our space warp technology. This is the only similarity we have with that group of politicians. Both of our spaceships have that technology."

Ren Tao added, "From the perspective of physics, time itself is meaningless; it comes into being when it has something to affect. Furthermore, time progresses differently in different situations. Variables like speed, gravity, and magnetic fields affect the passage of time. Therefore, space warp might not be a warp from one space to the next like we thought. It probably affects time too. Or perhaps during warp, we pass by something like a black hole that speeds up the time on the Hope. All these are possibilities, but I would advise you to pose this question to the Academy or Bo Li. We are, after all, not scientists like Einstein."

Yao Yuan thought about it and decided to let the question slide for now. He then said, "The alien seems to be telling the truth, and his story does corroborate the things you two told me earlier. Other than the issue of time, everything else makes sense. Before us, there was indeed another group of humans that tricked them. Therefore, they would put on the aggression first. Of course, this is not to say that they are innocent. After all, they admitted that if their opponent has Cosmic Adapters, they do everything to steal them. From this point alone, it could be said that they are not some do-gooders either."

Guang Zhen concurred, "They definitely are not. They led their assault with the pretense of trade and they have the face to call

themselves merchants."

After a long discussion and food break, the big-brained alien was brought back into the room to continue the interrogation.

Similarly, it was Yao Yuan who led the questioning. "I think we've learned everything we need to know about the history, but how can you be sure now that this is all a misunderstanding? Is it because we are different from that earlier race?"

The alien shook its head. "No, you're definitely the same race. The only reason I know this is a misunderstanding is because you guys have no idea what the Law of Conservation of Life for space civilizations is. This should be common knowledge to all level 2 space civilizations and beyond. Furthermore, during our earlier trade with your tribesmen, this information was included in the things that we lost. If you were them, then you would've known about this, and there would've been no need for the earlier interrogation, so I and we are now certain you two are not the same."

'I and we?' Yao Yuan picked up this curious use of pronouns, but he didn't point it out. Instead, he asked, "Okay then, if you know this is a misunderstanding, then would you tell us what this Law of Conservation of Life is?"

The alien didn't hesitate. "The meaning of this law is that the longer the civilization survives in space, the weaker the soul of the civilization. In other words, the future generations of such a civilization will become dimmer and dimmer until the civilization disappears completely in space. It is because of this law that the

cosmos doesn't have many high level civilizations. In fact, the number of those is extremely small. This is why the cosmos isn't crowded with life forms even though it has been around for billions of years. This is a law that keeps the balance on the number of space civilizations, and it is called...

"The Law of Conservation of Life."

Chapter 257: Where is Life?

The second conversation with the big-brained alien confused everyone again. The contents were perplexing, so after the short interrogation, the group started another discussion.

"First, let's just ignore the Law of Conservation of Life for now. Do you still remember when the big-brained alien said that their race has a strong psychic link? Previously, when the two of you talked to their tribesmen, the contents were shared among the rest of the big-brained aliens too," Yao Yuan told Ren Tao and Xiao Niao.

Ren Tao nodded firmly. "Indeed, during the interrogation, the big-brained alien used the pronoun 'we' as well. In other words, talking to one is similar to talking to all, including their executives, provided the big-brained alien just now didn't lie to us."

Xiao Niao concurred. Witnessing this, Yao Yuan continued, "Therefore, the problem of meeting with the space merchant executives that has been troubling us is now handily solved. We can start the negotiations whenever we want. Then, we need to start gathering information on these executives, information like where is their bottom line, do they function as a collective or individual. These will aid us during the upcoming negotiations, and finding out the information will be both of your tasks."

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao looked at each other. They had to accept the mission. Therefore, the rest of their day would be spent feeling out the big-brained alien. The moment they got the information they needed would be when the negotiation started in earnest.

"Ol' Wong, you lead the Defense Unit soldiers and half of the Black Star Troopers to bunker down the bridgehead. Stop the aggression and plant the H-bombs at strategic locations. After that, we wait. I will have the Hope send a few political experts over since their help might be needed for the negotiations." Yao Yuan thought about it and added, "Also, a few members from the Academy, they might be needed as well."

Guang Zhen saluted and moved to oblige.

After that, Yao Yuan turned back to Ren Tao and Xiao Niao. "So what do the two of you think about this Law of Conservation of Life?"

Xiao Niao answered first. "This law sounds ambiguous as best. There is no precedent or proof to its existence, and there is no detailed explanation. Even though it is unlikely that the alien was lying to us, I'm still suspicious regarding this law."

Yao Yuan added, "You're right, this law does sound suspicious. It sounds like something a teenager made up after reading a few science magazines..."

Ren Tao suddenly said, "I'm not sure whether the both of you have noticed, but this mother ship sure looks old and damaged."

The two were taken aback. They were both Thinkers, though the power wasn't that powerful in Yao Yuan. Xiao Niao took a careful look around and suddenly yelped in realization. Even though Yao

Yuan had no clue what that meant, he realized this meant that Ren Tao probably had his own unique understanding to this Law of Conservation of Life.

Unsurprisingly, he heard Ren Tao say, "From the information we took from the junkyard civilization, the space merchants are a trading conglomerate comprised of multiple races. The actual population number is unknown, but the safest estimates put it at above ten thousand ships. Or rather, a group with such a number could only qualify to call itself a space merchant conglomerate. They are a civilization with access to a large amount of 4th revolution technology and some from the 5th revolution.

"However, the weird point of this civilization is that while they have access to these technologies, they aren't creative with them. In other words, they can only trade these technologies with other civilizations and not use them for themselves to improve their technological level. For them, something like a science tree doesn't exist. Even though they possess 5th revolution technology, they aren't be able to utilize it to branch out to study other related technologies.

"A civilization that operates in this manner shouldn't exist, because technology doesn't exist in block form. It can't be isolated out. Like we've mentioned, it is impossible for a civilization with high-tech weapons but stone-age armor to appear, because science is continuous, complete, and universal."

At this point, realization slowly dawned for Yao Yuan. He said, "I think I know what you're getting at. You're right, there was a curious feeling when I first stepped into this mother ship.

Everything just felt wrong. It is too broken, like it's an antique. Of course, they might be going for a retro feel, but what about those rough repairs? They felt like they were done by inexperienced mechanics; they ruined a perfectly fine product. If we use this perspective to understand the Law of Conservation of Life...

"First, we must remind ourselves that this law hasn't been proved to be true, it is something concluded by the aliens after years of observation. Every race starts to decline after leaving its mother planet. As time passes, more and more of the newborns of that civilization will be born retarded; some might not even possess the soul of the race. They are nothing more than just 'meat'..."

These were the details given by the big-brained alien during the second part of the interrogation. Yao Yuan was going through them verbally again.

"If the civilization is unable to achieve level 9 space civilization before the entire civilization becomes so-called 'meat' and isn't given the opportunity to recharge their 'soul', then said civilization will perish in space.

"The supposed Law of Conservation of Life is heavily related to the Shelters, because the retarded and the 'meat' can be recycled at the Shelters and the 'soul' energy produced after they are sacrificed can be used to birth normal newborns. The level of 'soul' for a civilization will thus always be a constant for any civilization, and this is the Law of Conservation of Life."

Yao Yuan frowned. "The key question then falls on this 'soul',

what exactly is it? Also, let's not disregard the possibility of the meaning being lost in translation. It might be translated as 'soul' in our language, but it can very well mean something similar, like spirit or essence. Furthermore, why would the danger of extinction disappear after a space civilization reaches level 9? However, Xiao Niao, this is very similar to what ZERO told you."

Xiao Niao nodded while massaging his temples. "Everyone, let's conclude everything we've discussed so far. First, the Law of Conservation of Life speaks of civilizations' decline and how to prevent that. It also explains why the entire cosmos isn't filled with space civilizations by now and why there are so few high level civilizations. Personally, I think everything is tied to that concept of 'soul', but what does it represent? Soul or spirituality? Or is it something that our human language doesn't even comprehend?"

Ren Tao suddenly added, "Actually, what Xiao Niao said indirectly proves the validity of this conservation of life law... I remember reading a piece in a science magazine. It was written by a famous scientist whose name escapes my memory now, but it basically argued for the lack of life in space. According to calculations, the cosmos has been around for around ten billion years. If there is a space-faring civilization, then it would populate the cosmos like a cancer cell because life growth is an exponential increase...

"As long as the civilization's technology is good enough to allow survival in space, like terraforming planets to make them habitable or a large enough spaceship to sustain the whole civilization, then its population would triple within a hundred years, and the cosmos has been around for more than that. If this civilization survives in space for at least one hundred million

years, then it would cover the entire cosmos, so the conclusion given by the scientist was that the cosmos only plays host to us humans, and not other intelligent life forms.

"Of course, we now know that this is false, and to be fair, many contested this conclusion when it was published back then. They each gave their own theories, and one of the more famous ones was the theory of the Black Jungle. The cosmos is like a dangerous forest, and every civilization is in hiding. Once they are exposed, they will be destroyed. In other words, the different civilizations keep the balance in space.

"However, one important premise of the Black Forest theory is that light-speed is an unbreakable limit. This premise is already false, so we can safely assume the Black Forest theory is not valid either. So, my question is easy. The cosmos is so big, so why have we only stumbled across the space merchants so far and not other living, sentient space civilizations? Theoretically speaking, if a race can survive in space, then it will have free reign to populate the cosmos, so why is the cosmos so empty? Why?

"We were indeed proffered an answer, the Law of Conservation of Life. After a civilization leaves its home planet, it will continue to decline. If viewed from this perspective, then maybe the law is true.

"We didn't stumble across more aliens when we were back on Earth or even in space because 99.99999999 percent of those space civilizations... have declined and perished!"

Chapter 258: Start of the Negotiations

The theories mentioned by Ren Tao were familiar to Yao Yuan and Xiao Niao. It was a famous incident back on Earth. Specifically, two scientists were arguing about aliens, and one of them suddenly asked: if there are aliens, where are they?

The sentence spoke volumes. First, if we accept the premise that there are aliens or other sentient life forms in the cosmos, according to the lifespan of the universe, there has to have been aliens before the birth of humanity or even Earth itself. This is undeniable because the universe has been around for a long time. It is too conceited to assume that humanity is the first life form to appear.

If we pursue this line of thought, why don't those aliens that have already been there for so many years before the arrival of humanity not show themselves on Earth? Logically speaking, they should have been scientifically advanced enough to make contact with the people on Earth or even make Earth their colony, so why didn't they?

For example, a space civilization that has mastered space travelling technology one million years before humanity. What can it do in that span of one million years? Perhaps the civilization, like mankind, had a penchant for fighting civil wars, and since the civilization would have better weapons, they blew themselves up in space.

However, the cosmos is enormous. What are chances that every space civilization went through the same thing?

One million years is more than enough for any space civilization to propagate for multiple generations. Logical assumptions say that the population for every civilization will double every one thousand years, and how many one thousand years are inside a million years? The population for that civilization would be large enough to fill every planet they have come across.

So why hadn't humanity discovered any space civilizations? Even using space surveillance technology, the one thing we could see was a sea of silence and utter loneliness, as if the entire cosmos was home to humanity only.

Based on this observable reality, multiple theories emerged. Some argued there were only human beings in the whole cosmos, and others supplied theories like the Black Forest theory.

However, after that theory was overturned due to the ability to breach light-speed, the Academy had tossed out many other speculations. Furthermore, the discovery of the junkyard civilization proved that humanity was not alone in space, so why? Why there were so few living civilizations in the wide cosmos?

Finally, humanity was proffered a logical answer: the Law of Conservation of Life.

As an example, a civilization has entered space after its 4th revolution. The scientific progress keeps going on even though they are in space, but they realize that the progress is gradually but surely slowing down until it eventually stagnates. Several decades

later, the future generation of this civilization suddenly realized that they can't understand the scientific theorems left behind by their ancestors and then list them as ancient super high tech technology. Like the space merchants, they could use them but not understand them.

As time passes, the civilization suddenly realizes that the number of retards in its future generations is gradually increasing until the stage where the ratio can't be ignored anymore.

The obvious question would be "why." No one would know, and even after they scanned through the scriptures left behind by their ancestors, there would not be an answer. Was it genetic? Impossible. With a large enough gene pool and no incestuous marriages, how could there be a massive scale of retardation affecting their newborns?

Just like that, the civilization gives birth to more intelligence-challenged babies, and when it comes time to pass on the torch to these new generations, they realize that there is no intelligence in their future generation, perhaps not even basic knowledge; they are nothing more than 'meat'!

Finally, before they can reach the sixth revolution, the whole civilization perishes in space. Other than the large spaceship's ruins, no one can find a trace of this civilization anymore...

Yao Yuan, Ren Tao, and Xiao Niao shivered when they envisioned these images in their minds. It was as if they were seeing humanity's future, and it was scary enough to steal their breaths away.

Yao Yuan said immediately, "All the information, details, and elaboration about this Law of Conservation of Life, we must get it from the merchants no matter what... It's lucky that we are the winner of this war that we can demand spoils of war. If we realized that there were retards among our newborns only later on, then it would've really been a tragedy."

Ren Tao thought about it and said, "There are two key questions: one, what is 'soul,' and two, what is the relationship between cosmic adapters and this Law of Conservation of Life."

Xiao Niao interrupted, "Why are we still hung up on these while we should be preparing for the upcoming negotiations? If we can get another victory during the negotiations, all of this information will naturally be ours. Everything will be clear then. Furthermore, we will end up with a large amount of 4th revolution technologies that we do not have yet, and not to mention those 5th revolution technologies. This might be the kick humanity needs to become a level 3 space civilization."

The other two nodded in agreement. They stopped discussing the law and started focusing on their own task.

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao returned to question the big-brained alien and its clansmen. They posed them different questions, trying to gauge from their answers and responses to see whether they had been lying to them and also to get more bargaining chips for the upcoming negotiations.

Yao Yuan took over Guang Zhen's commanding duties... because Guang Zhen was simply too tired. He had not rested ever since the army marched into the space merchants' mother ship. He was finally given release when Yao Yuan took over.

Under Yao Yuan's orders, twenty negotiators were selected from the Hope. Other than the business experts, some political experts were needed as well. The selection process surprised even Yao Yuan. The originally peaceful Hope came up in a ruckus because almost all of the representatives had volunteered to represent humanity during the negotiations. Even Speaker Matt volunteered himself, expressing his wish to be part of the negotiation team.

This was going to be mankind's first negotiation with an alien civilization, and this was a peace talk with mankind as the victorious party. If the negotiations were successful, all those involved would be written into the history books!

Which politicians or lobbyists didn't want a chance at that? This would be great political asset! In the future, when the number of mankind's population has increased and the governmental system has expanded, those that participated in this momentous negotiation will have an unimaginable political weight!

Therefore, the vehemence shown by these politicians overwhelmed even Yao Yuan. Initially, he thought no one would be willing to go to the enemy's mother ship due to fear of death. He intended to force them into it through orders, but obviously he had underestimated their political sensitivity...

In truth, the politicians' desire for name and fame was much

greater than the business experts'. Most of the time, the business people still valued their lives more than fame, but any politician worth his weight would tell you that the most important thing in his or her life was their name. They would pick death if death would bring them a good name after the fact.

Moreover, they noticed that the human army had already set up a bridgehead in the mother ship. Even though the politicians were not particularly clear about what was going on between the two sides, mankind had managed to fight until they had secured a position inside the enemy's spaceship, so how dangerous could it really get...

12 hours later, a group of about 140 people in size departed from the Hope. Bo Li's alien robot helped transport this shuttle of people from the Hope to the space merchants' mother ship. Matt, who led the group, told Yao Yuan when he stepped out of the shuttle, "Captain, do not worry. With our names and reputations on the line, I assure you we will fight until they lose even the pants they're wearing!"

"...I believe in you."

He wasn't lying. Yao Yuan had full faith in the group of politicians. After all, earlier, with only 3rd revolution technology, they had managed to swindle alien merchants so much. Now, with a gun to the space merchants' heads, if this group of politicians were still unable to have a landslide victory, then he would truly suspect the usefulness of this group of politicians who once gave him enormous headache.

In conclusion, after 48 hours, mankind infiltrated the space merchants' mother ship. The peace talks between mankind and space merchants began at a location already occupied by the Black Star Troopers...

Chapter 259: A Landslide Victory

There wasn't much to be said about the negotiation process other than the fact that it had lasted for about 2 days. The negotiations were led by all manner of politicians, business experts, and some scientists. Their conclusion was that the negotiations were too simple, so much so that they suspected the space merchants were playing another trick on them.

From the start of the negotiation, Speaker Matt argued that the war only started because the space merchants ambushed mankind under the pretext of trade and every bit of damage mankind inflicted was in self-defense. Therefore, the fault of the war fell squarely on the space merchants.

Of course, these were just opening statements; no serious negotiators would take them as facts and conclusions. In affairs of war, winners take all. However, the 10 big-brained aliens that led the negotiations and the other aliens behind them accepted it as the truth. First, they tried to reason by going into how they were first swindled by humanity and then brought up the heartless massacre done by the human military, but those were quickly rebutted by the human negotiators. In the end, the space merchants accepted full culpability for the war.

Things were a lot easier after that. Since the other party had accepted full responsibility for the damage, asking for compensation was no different from direct burglary. Especially after the human negotiators brought up the numbers of human deaths, be it normal civilians, Defense Unit soldiers, and most importantly, 30 Homo Evolutis. The space merchants gave them wounded expressions. They promised to compensate with

anything that humanity wanted as long as they were given a chance to live. This was an answer even some of the human negotiators felt sorry for pushing them into.

Therefore, 2 days later, in the report Yao Yuan received, after the peace talks, humanity gained unimaginable victory.

First, the big-brained aliens, as the administrators of the space merchant civilization, hoped to be pardoned and be allowed to lead the rest of their civilization back to their Shelter in an evacuation spaceship. Everything else, such as all the 4th revolution and 5th revolution technologies, cosmos information, star navigation charts, information on the Law of Conservation of Life, and even the mother ship itself would be handed over the mankind.

In other words, this negotiation, which Yao Yuan thought would drag on and on for at least months, was concluded so easily. Humanity got a landslide victory. This was a result greater than what Yao Yuan could have imagined. The space merchants were practically talked into giving up everything they had, and they agreed to it!

This was so uncanny that even Yao Yuan suspected that the space merchants were playing a game. Therefore, his first order was to have all the soldiers be on alert. Simultaneously, he had soldiers stand by the H-bombs. If there was something suspicious, he was going to blow up the mother ship without a second thought.

However, nothing weird happened. A few hours after the peace talks, a big-brained alien approached Yao Yuan to tell him that a group of their clansmen was going to the Hope to unlock the

quantum code. The space merchants were giving up their last leverage.

However, as a precaution, Yao Yuan still arranged for many things. First, there was a staff adjustment within the Hope. The Defense Unit soldiers were led by the experts to station themselves at the strategic locations on the Hope. If they discovered that the Hope's self-destruction sequence was activated, then they would manually cut off the Hope's main power source, causing another blackout. Furthermore, Yao Yuan only allowed one big-brained alien to go on the Hope to solve the quantum lock.

Even with all these precautions set in place, everyone was still worried. After all, the Hope was the root for all humanity; if the Hope was destroyed, then it would be over for the human civilization, so one couldn't be too cautious.

Several hours later, full control of the Hope was regained and the quantum virus was fully analyzed. There was no ruse. The big-brained alien returned to its mother ship obediently. It was like they promised, they had surrendered completely.

Yao Yuan couldn't understand or even imagine just how a race like this had become the administrators of multiple races. Or even called themselves space merchants.

Then again, during mankind's first contact with these space merchants, the business experts already informed Yao Yuan that the business skills of the space merchants were like those of children, completely no match for the human experts. So it was no wonder they were swindled by the small spaceship full of human

politicians so many years ago.

"Theirs is a civilization moving towards racial senescence. While it might be true that they were an incredibly bright civilization when they initially left their home planet, after 20,000 years in space, the intelligence level of the civilization dropped to a frightening low. They have even lost their ability to adapt and create technology. I'm afraid that in several thousand years, the big-brained alien race will probably disappear from space." Xiao Niao sighed beside Yao Yuan.

This was one week after the Hope's control was regained. The aftermath of the war was still going on. The space merchants suggested the Hope disperse the creator's particles so they could directly transfer the information mankind needed to the Hope, but that idea was firmly rejected by Yao Yuan.

Yao Yuan wouldn't let his guard down even at a concluding period like this. He was afraid the trap was set at these last few moments. Therefore, Yao Yuan not only rejected the idea of deactivating the creator's particles, but also activated the Hope's ECS system. To facilitate the information transfer from the mother ship to the Hope, 100 Defense Unit soldiers and ten Black Star Troopers were ordered to create a creator's-particle-free corridor from the room where the big-brained alien executives resided to the bridgehead. Cables would be set up in the corridor to help transfer information.

The project lasted for about a week. Today was going to be the day the big-brained alien sent over information on the 4th revolution and 5th revolution technologies and information about

the cosmos. Scientists from multiple fields were on standby to look over the information sent just in case the space merchants played tricks or gave false information.

Inside a rest capsule, Yao Yuan, Ren Tao, and Xiao Niao were sifting through the most important information, the document on the Law of Conservation of Life, and the accompanying information. The creator of the law and the time of creation was unknown, other than the fact that its history was longer than the space merchants and even the Shelter where they hailed from. According to the law, all forms of life were a combination of two elements, soul and material. The so-called soul was also spirit.

Every living thing has a soul because those without one cannot be called living, and this included AI. No matter whether it was low level AI, mid level AI, or high level AI, no AI contained a soul, so they could only survive according to the rules set down by their creators. No matter what, their own technology would not be greater than the civilization that created them, because without a soul, they didn't have the ability to create and invent.

Every race has its soul, but the moment it leaves its home planet, the soul will become a constant; it will not increase nor decrease unless it finds a new home planet to populate. The soul will not be affected by the death or birth rate. The soul of a dead person will be transferred to a newborn, and that creates an equalizer.

However, this Law of Conservation of Life is limited by reality. Just like the law of conservation of energy, not 100 percent of the energy is transferred, so a large percentage actually dissipates into the surroundings during transference. So with souls, while most

are absorbed by newborns, some souls dissipate into space, thus causing racial senescence.

Some technologies in the 5th revolution can prevent soul energy from escaping into the cosmos, and this contributes to the creation of Shelters. Shelters are locales that were built with the cooperation of multiple civilizations. They are pretty much the soul energy recycling centers. Life forms from enemy civilizations or even inmates and retards from one's own are brought to the Shelter to be sacrificed to increase the amount of soul energy within a civilization. That is the purpose of Shelters.

Cosmic Adapters are so valuable because all types of Cosmic Adapters' souls have undergone certain changes to adapt to a life in space without the need for the anchor of a home planet. They can absorb soul energy and pass them down safely to their own civilization's newborns...

In other words, as long as a civilization has Cosmic Adapters, that civilization will never fall into decline!

Chapter 260: Reward and Time to Leave

It looked like the space merchants really weren't planning anything sinister this time, or at least it seemed to be so from Yao Yuan's, Ren Tao's, and Xiao Niao's observations.

The space merchants took fifteen days to transfer a large amount of tech information and details about the cosmos to humanity. After that, the big-brained aliens planned to escape using a small spaceship, abandoning their mother ship and other races. This plan was rejected by Yao Yuan because he was afraid the big-brained aliens were secretly planning a self-destructive sequence on the mother ship, which would blow up the humans on it. Who would then seek compensation from them then?

In the fifteen days, all sorts of technological information was categorized by the Academy to detect their authenticity. This was easy for technology from the 4th revolution and below. The Academy truly shone at this task; they only needed 10 minutes to several hours to differentiate the authenticity of the information and categorize it accordingly. The whole Academy from the highest committee leaders to the smallest interns or even science students from Hope University were busy sifting through the information. Basically, all of the 4th revolution information and below it took only three days to compile.

The keys were still the four types of 5th revolution technology.

The first was the warp drive engine. Even though it was only an engine, it involved two 5th revolution technologies. One was the plasmatic energy concentration point that the team led by Ying

came across. Since warp drive required a large amount of energy in a particular unit of time, especially when it entered warp drive, the normal electrical power was no longer enough to satisfy the exhaustion. Therefore, it had to rely on a higher-grade plasmatic energy as fuel. Thus, the first 5th revolution technology was about how to convert electricity to plasma and how to store and use plasmatic energy.

The second was the technology of warp drive itself. This included how to build it and things to look out for, but the thing that angered the scientists the most was that there was no related scientific explanation. Elaborations like the science behind the warp drive, the formulas, and theories were conspicuously missing!

It was like they were given a computer schematic and all the necessary components but weren't taught how a computer operates, the purpose of individual hardware, and the programming of software! It was preposterous!

After all, warp drive was more than simple FTL navigation. According to Silwei, this particular technological tree involved technology regarding power, space, and basic knowledge about the great cosmos. In other words, if humanity gained the whole technological tree of the space warp technology, it would be as great as pre-20th century human society gaining the theory of relativity or post-20th century human society gaining quantum theory; it would be a giant push to increase the scientific level on the Hope!

The space merchants only gave humanity the manufacturing

guide to the space warp and not its details? The Academy was as angry as humanly possible. Therefore, the negotiation team had no choice but to resume the talks with the big-brained aliens. After more threats, promises, and words, the answer was...

The space merchants only knew the manufacturing method, and even that was traded with a large amount of money. The trade happened more than 6,000 years ago, and as for the actual technological tree, they really didn't have it...

Naturally, the answer couldn't satisfy the Academy, but the big-brained aliens were out of ideas as well. They even volunteered to sacrifice half of their clansmen for compensation, but Yao Yuan had no use for the group of aliens that were mixed with retards. In the end, mankind accepted the technology begrudgingly. Thankfully, mankind wasn't like the space merchants; they could draw inference from the space warp technology itself. With enough time, the Academy believed they could fully dissect the space warp technology...

This carried on for eight days, and the next 5th revolution technology was the technology the Barracks was looking for, energy simulation system!

This was technology found after the peak of the 4th revolution and the beginning of the 5th. It used magnetic fields to focus energy to create multiple combination effects.

The Requiem used by the space merchants was an example of this technology in action. In other words, as long as there was a big enough store of energy, all sorts of Gaussian weapons could be

formed using the prepared magnetic program layout.

Of course, this technology wasn't perfect either. Using the same example, while the Requiem had large damage output, it required at least 10 minutes to charge up, and that was through the large energy supply of the space merchants' mother ship. If the Hope wanted to fire a shot from the Requiem, it would need at least several hours to charge.

The last 5th revolution technology was the nanobot technology that repaired the mother ship earlier.

In actuality, this technology should've been situated between 4th and 5th revolutions, so this technology was the most complete technology among all the five given by the space merchants. This technology also had multiple elements. First was the construction of nanobots, including the chips and materials; second was electromagnetic microwave sensing technology, which allowed nanobots to function as long as they were within the microwave range; third was the creation and control of first level AI.

Of all the technologies given by the space merchants, this was the only one that could satisfy mankind. The Academy, especially the scientists studying AI, were overjoyed when they received this information that was absent from the junkyard civilization's database. If not for the fact that the big-brained aliens were enemies, they would have hugged and kissed them. The scientists were acting like crazies. According to their statements, after a clear and thorough analysis of this information, mankind would welcome a new technological era!

Fifteen days had passed just to sift through all the technological information. After that would be data and info about the cosmos. The amount of information was about 10 times the scientific information. That was how big the data was. When Yao Yuan was assigning people to look over the information one by one, Ren Tao and Xiao Niao approached him with a warning.

"After a deliberation between the both of us, we believe we should leave this area as soon as possible." Ren Tao and Xiao Niao located Yao Yuan, who was in the middle of a meeting with the negotiation group, and told him thusly before the crowd.

The room went into a riot, protesting the two's proposal. They cited many reasons, like the space merchants still had plenty of valuable ores and they could even work on assimilating some of the alien races into human society, etc...

In other words, no one was in the agreement with the two.

Compared to the group of representatives who almost lost their minds, Yao Yuan asked them calmly after he silenced the room, "What's your reason? Right now we're going through our spoils of war, so why should we leave now?"

Xiao Niao replied, "Spoils of war? We already have more than enough, don't we? Almost all the technological and cosmos information has already been transferred over. What else are we missing? Do you think the Hope still needs those minerals when the Hope is already filled to the brim with rare minerals? Unless we add another few layers to the spaceship, where would we put the minerals? The broken alien mother ship? Do we really need

that? Assimilation of the space merchant race that could backstab us at any moment? Why would we need that? What haven't we pillaged from the space merchants yet that is really valuable?"

Yao Yuan frowned and said, "Indeed, we will never assimilate the space merchant races. Since we already know about the Law of Conservation of Life, adding those weakened races into our own will only slow us down. And you're right, they are, after all, not of human blood. Who knows what they'll do when faced with the threat of extinction. However, why should we abandon the mother ship? Admittedly, the internal parts are rather old, but it is still a giant ship. Plus, the deterioration is because the aliens didn't have the ability to create. If we take over the mother ship, we can easily give it a new life.

"After all, the Hope is too small. It might be enough for our current population, but what about fifty years from now? One hundred years? Or even one thousand years? Since we have a ready spaceship, I really don't mind accepting it. At most we'll spend a few years to fit it with anti-gravitational systems and..."

Yao Yuan stopped because he too had realized wherein the problem lied. First was the issue with the anti-gravitational systems. It had been mentioned earlier that the Hope was designed in an elongated shape because that was the limit of mankind's computational capability. To maintain a balance after fitting the anti-gravitational system, there was a limit to the size, length, and width of the spaceship...

Even with the latest 4th revolution computers, it was impossible to calculate accurately the schematics needed to fit the giant

mother ship with correctly-placed anti-gravitational systems. In other words, this would be a mother ship without anti-gravitational systems...

Perhaps it could continue to use centrifugal force to maintain its balance. However, that would lead to problem number two. If they needed to warp alongside the mother ship, then they would have to reassign the energy circuits on the mother ship, every single one of them! Or else it wouldn't be able to support the high amount of energy needed during warp. Furthermore, the mother ship was humongous. The upgrade would take more than a few months...

The limit was time, and mankind couldn't possibly stay there and idle for a few years.

This was because the space merchants were a conglomerate and had access to a Shelter. Who knew how big the size of the total space merchant conglomerate was? For example, the last civilization the space merchants mentioned trading with was a civilization that was attacking a Shelter, so that meant it was at least in the 5th revolution, right?

Maybe the space merchants would return to seek revenge using warp drive? If humanity stayed there longer, up to few years, maybe they would end up as space dust before they even realized danger was coming their way... Therefore, as Ren Tao and Xiao Niao said, they had to abandon that part of the cosmos as soon as possible!

Chapter 261: Funeral and Departure

The news of the Hope leaving was soon spread to the public after being announced at the House of Representatives.

The discussion at the house lasted for more than an hour, and it involved many different facets, like the first contact with an alien civilization, the first war with an alien civilization, the loss and gain from that war, the many heroes that had lost their lives for humanity, the peace talks, and much more. Yao Yuan used self-criticism and plans for the future to end the discussion.

"...Before I wrap everything up, I have to confess something before the entirety of the Hope. I, Yao Yuan, the captain of this ship, have made a horrible decision when it came to contact with this space civilization. Even though the war ended up with us victorious, it still doesn't take away from my bad decision."

Yao Yuan continued openly on stage, "As a space civilization that has a lower technological level than the space merchants, and to be totally honest, most of the space civilizations, our main target shouldn't be swindling the people we come in contact with but rather try our best to keep humanity alive. I shouldn't have tried to bet our survival on some benefits. In retrospect, I realize how stupid it was, because we cannot afford to commit to such a bet! We might have won this time, and we might win next time or even a few hundred times after that, but if we lose once, then it will be over for mankind. I'm sorry, I was so blinded by the benefits that I almost caused the extinction of humanity. I will remember this lesson in my heart and have this mistake recorded in our history books so that my mistake will not repeat itself! Here, I would like to offer my sincerest apology."

With that, Yao Yuan bowed deeply at the crowd gathered before the stage. A camera was rolling. The image would be sent across the Hope.

Several seconds later, Yao Yuan straightened himself. He continued, "However, I will not resign, as suggested by a few representatives, and hand my power over to the majority. That is impossible because from the information that we've gathered, the danger in the cosmos is far greater than we previously imagined. The rule is the survival of the fittest, and mankind is still too weak. We need to persevere together towards the same goal and not fight for individual power and instill disagreement among the people. With that in mind, the following five individuals will be fired from the House of Representatives and not allowed to take any more public positions as long as they may live: Philip, Aretota, Johnson..."

The five representatives who were named first gave looks of disbelief before turning ashen grey. They looked around them, trying to elicit aid from their 'allies,' but what they received were gazes of condescension. Eventually, they hung their heads in shame and despair.

Since the peace talks began, a strange rumor started to appear on the Hope, saying that the war had only started due to Yao Yuan's failure to lead and make correct decisions, causing huge danger to humanity as a whole. Eventually, the rumor reached a point where it hoped for Yao Yuan to voluntarily resign from his position as captain of the ship.

This rumor appeared when Speaker Matt was away from the Hope to join in the negotiations. The voices of the rumor kept increasing, but Yao Yuan made no move, causing some of the representatives to believe he was an idiot when it came to politics, and thus they aligned themselves with the rumor spreaders. This added to the uproar around the Hope.

In truth, about ten days ago, Speaker Matt had already known about these views that were circulating the public. Some of the politicians in the negotiations also critiqued Yao Yuan, and Matt only smiled. This was what he said: "Our mission here is not to create internal conflict but to get the best deals we can out of this negotiation... And to your point, it is not that our captain doesn't know the political game, but rather he doesn't want to play it. This is how a clever man acts. You newbies are too inexperienced to tell the difference between a real politician and a lousy lobbyist."

Through the negotiations, Yao Yuan received a landslide victory on behalf of humanity. A whole set of 4th revolution technology to complement the incomplete technological tree taken from the junkyard civilization, four technologies from the 5th revolution, unlimited information about the great cosmos, space navigational charts, star maps, information on note-worthy space civilizations, space languages, and much more.

With these victories, Yao Yuan quenched the plotting against him once and for all and the five representatives who were found to have led the plotting were fired from their positions. In other words, their political lives were over.

The punishment might seem "harsh," but this was the difference

between a politician and a lobbyist. A lobbyist might sway the political opinion using someone's unfortunate misstep, but a politician will prove his mettle using his actions and not words. Matt was present when Yao Yuan made this decision. He knew Yao Yuan had garnered another victory. A hero who fought for the safety of mankind on the battlefield shouldn't be dragged down by a few lobbyists who only looked out for themselves. Therefore, if Yao Yuan couldn't handle this on his own, Matt was going to step in, but that didn't seem to be necessary, because Yao Yuan handled the crisis better than he could possibly imagine.

After the discussion, the Hope was set to conduct another space warp about 10 days later. The ten days would be used to further delineate the authenticity of the information and dealing with the aftermath of the war, like the funerals of those who had passed away. On this issue, Yao Yuan suggested a large-scale worship ritual that would be held on the space merchants' mother ship.

Other than the usual celestial burial, another ritual with heavy Chinese cultural influence was going to be held as well. It was to appease the spirit of the many people whose lives were lost in the war. Some said this was only a show, others claimed it was to raise military morale. Either way, it was undeniable that Yao Yuan had poured a lot of effort into preparing this ritual.

The fatality rate for this war was too high. After calculations, the Black Star Troopers were left with 118 people, meaning 30 plus troopers had died! About one-fourth of the Defense Unit, or 600 plus soldiers, had perished! There was less of a fatality rate in the civilians, but they too had suffered a loss of about 200 people.

Other than that, Ying from the Black Star Unit had died. This was the person other than Yao Yuan and Guang Zhen that could lead the army. Ying's prowess and carefulness at many times could be said to be greater than Guang Zhen and only slightly below Yao Yuan. He was also the most powerful Seeker on the Hope...

However, Yao Yuan didn't receive his soul. Perhaps it was due to the long distance or too much time having passed, because Yao Yuan only felt fourteen new fireballs representing the Survivors around his sun-like soul. He didn't feel Ying's presence.

No matter what, the ritual had to happen.

Five days from the departure of the Hope, the ritual began. It was attended by 1,500 Defense Unit soldiers, all the Black Star Troopers, 500 civilian representatives, 100 plus from house of representatives, and 200 from the three bodies. The group entered the mother ship and used cenotaphs to welcome the lost souls of the human heroes back to their home. The event was solemn. The honor guards led the way, the Black Star Troopers carried the cenotaphs, and the Defense Unit shot their guns in honor of the lost men and women.

At the end of the ritual, Xi Kong, who followed along, suddenly sang an old song. The lyrics and melody had a retro feel to it. Many people had a hard time understanding what she was singing; they could only vaguely make out a few words...

"Soul return home, soul return home..."

But the lives of the heroes had been lost, so from whence would they return?

This song by the Hope's strongest Anima seemed to pierce the barrier of time and space and reverberated into everyone's souls. Not only those present had started to weep, the people on the Hope too started crying. Almost everyone on the Hope was standing by the window, watching the ritual from afar, waiting for their friends and families to return...

Even Yao Yuan felt himself tearing up. Ying, how can you leave your teammates just like this?

Death can come at any moment in a job like ours, but...

Brother, if there is a next lifetime, we shall fight alongside each other again!

Right then, Yao Yuan felt a change within him. He immediately used his Anima power to enter the dark recesses of his own soul. What he saw surprised him. Unknown to himself, his soul was surrounded by an additional ten extremely weak fireballs of souls. The fireballs were like candles in the wind. They could be blown out at any minute, but thankfully, the flame of his soul seemed to bring warmth to them, aiding them in their recovery. However, one of the brightest among the ten gave a sense of familiarity to Yao Yuan, a feeling of pride and aloofness combined with fragility and indescribable affection...

At the same time, in the deepest reaches of the mother ship, a

giant big-brained alien whose brain was at least double the size of the normal big-brained alien looked at its subordinates and said, "Level two soul web user and a legendary immortal. This is a leadership quality even civilizations that have broken through level 9 would want... Record everything...

"And then sell all the information, sell all the information we have on this race called human beings. Trade with level 3, 4, or even the rare 5 civilizations, then our race can finally become a level 3 civilization..."

All of this was happening behind Yao Yuan's back...

Five days after the ritual, the Hope warped again, disappearing completely from the empty space...

Chapter 262: The Demarcation of Space Civilizations

"I order..."

With Yao Yuan's new order of space warp, the thoughts of everyone on the Hope were pulled taut.

Even though the space merchants had completely surrendered to the Hope, during the space warp was when the Hope was at its most fragile, so it couldn't afford even the smallest damage.

Because of that, the Hope even purposely drifted away from the space merchants' mother ship for one whole day. Then it activated its creator's particles, activated the ECS System, and committed to every defense system that it could. Some of the more vicious people on the Hope even suggested blowing up the space merchants' mother ship. After all, humanity had gotten all they needed from them, why leave such a threat behind?

It might be so, but how exactly would they go about that and who would do it? Ever since mankind entered the twenty first century, there were limited cases of genocide, even during warfare. The fatalities suffered during war were different from purposely wiping out the whole race after the war. After all, mankind was a new space civilization, and their thoughts were still stuck in Earth's time.

If Ying was still around, making the space merchants extinct would be a non-issue, but the current the Hope really couldn't

wipe out an entire civilization without batting an eye. It was simply too cruel.

Furthermore, Ren Tao and Xiao Niao had made another argument. The space merchants were part of a bigger conglomerate. Pillaging spoils of war was acceptable, but wiping out an entire ship after winning a war would probably isolate the human race from other space civilizations, and that didn't seem to be worth it.

Due to multiple reasons, the extinction route was rejected by many. Therefore, the Hope prepared to avoid possible attacks before finally warping from the area...

The warp completed without a hitch. When the people inside the Hope came to, they were already far away from where they once were, and the space merchants' mother ship was no longer observable.

Everything was fine and peaceful. There was no attack, ambush, or accident. This space warp was better than the one preceding it. When they found themselves in a new space, the Hope's citizens couldn't help but sigh in relief. Some even started cheering. After all, no one wished for a war, especially when mankind's technological level was lower than its opponent's. Unlike wars on Earth, where the civilians could hide behind other neutral countries, there was no place to hide in the Hope. With a giant explosion of the Hope, the whole human civilization would be over, so no one wanted to experience the war anymore.

Yao Yuan sat in the commanding seat, waiting patiently for the

surveillance report. Very soon, the report reached him through the Hope's internal wireless connection. The area of ten light-years around the Hope had been properly scanned. There was no suspicious presence, external signals, celestial bodies, or planets. It was a completely barren space, the safest place for the Hope to stop and recuperate.

When he finished the report, Yao Yuan sighed in relief. He then told Guang Zhen, who was standing beside him, "Then I shall pass the commanding reins to you. I'm going to take a rest."

The day before the warp, Yao Yuan had spent his every waking hour preparing for it. All the accrued fatigue returned at that moment. Since there was no danger in sight, he could finally pass the leadership to Guang Zhen and enjoy a well-deserved rest.

Guang Zhen nodded. "You deserve it, rest well... Captain's order, the ship will be temporarily taken over by me!"

"Understood, the Hope's commanding rights are now being passed to Vice-Captain Wong Guang Zhen..."

"The Hope's commanding rights are now being passed to Vice-Captain Wong Guang Zhen..."

The news was broadcasted throughout the Hope. When Yao Yuan left central command, the whole ship knew that the commanding rights had changed hands. Yao Yuan returned to his room with the accompaniment of a few Black Star Troopers. After he closed the door, he washed his face and went for a warm bath. Days of

tiredness came at him at once, and at the moment he hit his bed, he fell asleep.

The sleep went on for almost half a day. Eventually, he woke up from hunger pangs. The military discipline he had cultivated over the years was overwhelmed by absolute fatigue. He was tired both mentally and physically.

He didn't have any rest during the war with the space merchants. He only stole a short nap after it was confirmed the war was over. After all, his time was taken up by the peace talks and analyzing the ton of new information. After that, it was the worship ritual. Then it was the defense system to ward against the space merchants. If he could sleep for three hours a day, it was already a good day.

Not to mention the giant pressure he was under. The whole human civilization depended on his decisions. A small decision to him might cause irreparable damage to the whole civilization, or it might cause extinction. The pressure pressed down hard on him.

Finally, when the Hope escaped from that situation and had been confirmed to have landed in a completely empty part of the cosmos, the collected fatigue released itself all at once. It overwhelmed his personal discipline, catching up on his sleep debt.

Even though Yao Yuan had woken up, he didn't sit up immediately. He looked at the time and confirmed he had been asleep for 15 hours. It was not that he was going back to sleep, but he needed the peace and quiet to sift through his thoughts.

First was, of course, regarding the Hope, or rather the future of humanity that was on the Hope. The cosmos was not as quiet as mankind thought. There were more intelligent life forms than they previously assumed.

Based on a cursory read of the space information, Yao Yuan realized that the Shelter which the space merchants hailed from comprised of 8,000 plus alien life forms. Among them were "newborn civilizations" that had left their home planets for only about several thousand years and also antique civilizations that had been in space for over 40,000 years.

If categorized via technological level, 99.5 percent of the civilizations at the Shelter were level 2 space civilizations. They had 4th revolution technologies and, like the space merchants, parts of the 5th revolution technology as well. The remaining 0.5 percent were level 3 space civilizations. They had officially entered the 5th revolution and thus had access to technologies like space warp and plasma weapons.

Of the 0.5 percent civilizations, there were three civilizations from the space merchants' Shelter that were close to reaching level 4. These three civilizations were the peaks of lower grade space civilizations.

It was also from the space merchants' information that Yao Yuan knew more clearly about the demarcation of space civilizations. First, space civilizations were divided into nine levels. Legends spoke of levels beyond the nine levels, like level ten, eleven, twelve, or even thirteen, but these civilizations were godlike

existences already. They would not appear before common civilizations, and they were no longer affected by the Law of the Conservation of Life. They no longer needed to pillage other civilizations' "souls" to foster their own. In other words, they had no reason to meddle in other space civilizations. They were known as the godlike civilizations.

While from Level 1 to Level 9, Level 1 to 3 were known as lower grade space civilizations, Level 4 to 6 are middle grade space civilizations, while Level 7 to 9 were known as high grade space civilizations.

Even though there was a great difference between two consecutive levels, like Level 2 civilizations could squash a Level 1 civilizations with the usage of creator's particles alone, and Level 3 civilization could do the same to Level 2 civilizations via the advantage of plasma weapons, strictly speaking, the difference was still within one's imagination. For example, the Level 2 civilizations, like humanity, might not really understand the inner workings of the Requiem used by the space merchants, but mankind roughly understood the concept of it.

The actual difference lied between the different grades. A Level 3 civilization could face off with a Level 4 civilization and the difference between the two would be unimaginable.

For example, Level 1 space civilizations relied on rocket propellers, Level 2 used the same but slightly improved, and Level 3 improved on it further to achieve warp drive speed, but the essential theories were the same; it was all about pushing force and propulsion.

However, Level 4 space civilizations could use wormhole technology. The difference between the two was unimaginable! Because of this, among the 8,000 plus civilizations crowding the Shelter, there was not one Level 4 space civilization!

Yao Yuan thought back to the information that he once roughly scanned. He didn't dwell on it. Level 4 space civilizations were too far a target for humanity, much less the godlike civilizations. The only thing awaiting the Hope was becoming a Level 3 space civilization!

Just as Yao Yuan was figuring out ways to expedite that process, suddenly his emergency communicator rang. He picked it up immediately. "This is Yao Yuan, what's happening!"

"Captain, people are coming down with fevers, no, not fevers, our people are awakening into Homo Evolutis!"

Yao Yuan was taken by surprise. He then asked with obvious joy, "Is that so? Finally, the new awakening has arrived. What about the number? Is there a hundred of them?"

"...Captain, it is more than a hundred, it is 570 people!"

"A total of 570 plus Homo Evolutis are awakening. This is even bigger than the scale of mankind's first Homo Evolutis awakening!"

Chapter 263: Cosmic Adapters

573 people! The number of Homo Evolutis awakening this time was 573 people!

This meant that the third awakening was even larger than the first two times combined!

After hearing this news, Yao Yuan immediately jumped out of bed. After a simple bathroom routine, he dashed towards the electromobile. The Black Star Troopers who had already changed shifts for the second time were confused by Yao Yuan's actions. However, they followed him obediently. They didn't dare to walk in front of him, so their Black Star space armors followed behind him 'slowly'.

In about 7 minutes, Yao Yuan arrived at the quarantine area where about 10 doctors were waiting. When he arrived, they quickly briefed him on the latest development.

"The first case of sudden fever happened the second hour after the space warp. Due to the experience from the earlier two awakenings, we moved all the patients into heavy quarantine rooms for close surveillance even though they only showcased minor symptoms. The patients were treated with genetic mesomeric devices and nutrient concoctions. Until now, we've received several hundred more cases of fevers. Now we can finally confirm we're ushering in the third Homo Evolutis awakening," the leading doctor informed Yao Yuan in a hurry.

Yao Yuan nodded in agreement as he stepped into the quarantine room. The original purpose of this room was to prevent alien virus outbreaks. However, with the advent of the Ultimate Vaccine, the possibility of that happening had greatly lowered. Therefore, the purpose of the room changed to prepare for the arrival of Homo Evolutis awakening.

Currently, the quarantine area had to accommodate three to four people a room compared to the earlier one people per room. This was due to the high amount of Homo Evolutis awakening this time around. Furthermore, it employed a 24 hour automatic surveillance system, thus solving the issue of lacking of doctors. So far, of the 573 fever cases, there were no deaths.

"An exceptional job, but don't let your guard now. Keep your eyes peeled for any incidents. If possible..." Yao Yuan paused for a moment. "I hope the fatality rate for this awakening is zero."

Of course, even though everyone knew the fatality rate for awakening had always been high, plus current medical technology couldn't make it a zero fatality rate, the doctors nodded in confirmation as they left the quarantine area with Yao Yuan.

After a moment more at the quarantine area, Yao Yuan felt uneasy. He realized that he looked like he was surveying the place like he was some kind of great leader putting on a show. So he stopped walking around and asked for a name list of all the patients and retired to central command.

In central command, Guang Zhen was at his very limit. However, he was still in the middle of handling some things, like the new

awakening. Ever since the first report of the Hope's new fever patients reached his hands, Guang Zhen had made it a priority. He sent out a great number of Defense Unit soldiers to the lower residential levels to check each residence for the occurrence of fever patients. So far, all of the fever patients had been discovered, totaling 573 people. If he didn't insist on sending the soldiers into people's houses, one-third of them probably would have died at home without medical assistance.

Yao Yuan was impressed by what Guang Zhen did. With the information they received from the space merchants, they understood the value of Homo Evolutis; they were deeply related to the advancement and longevity of a civilization. Therefore, every single one of them was important to the cause.

When Yao Yuan arrived at central command, he resumed command of the ship. The tired Gaung Zhen naturally returned to rest. After finishing his daily job, Yao Yuan pulled out the information on Homo Evolutis, or Cosmic Adapters, they had received from the space merchants. The information was long and complicated. They included not only information on the space adapters, but also Law of the Conservation of Life because the two were closely linked.

"Every being has a soul, but this soul only exists in planets that can breed life forms...

"The cosmos is wide and eternally expanding, but life-carrying planets are extremely rare, less than even 1/10000 of a percent. Under unknown circumstances, a planet acquires the ability to sustain life. If the planet doesn't suffer a space-grade catastrophe,

it will eventually evolve to be a cradle for a sentient race.

"The race will populate the whole planet limitlessly, or at least until the planet can't support them anymore. However, when the race enters the cosmos, its population will be greatly influenced by the Law of Conservation of Life, which means that the soul of a population will always stay constant. With the passage of time, the race will welcome its inevitable downfall. Without the supplement of external souls, the race will eventually disappear from the cosmos...

"The only exceptions are the Cosmic Adapter...

"The so-called Cosmic Adapters are an extremely limited group of a certain population that randomly gain the ability to adapt to life in space after they leave the comfort of their home planet. Depending on the Level of the space civilization and time away from home planet, the probability of a life form evolving to a Space Adapter is between 0.0001 percent and 0.0000001 percent. A formal calculation dictates that the lower the space civilization's level, the greater the chance for the appearance of Cosmic Adapters, and the longer the time spent from one's home planet, the greater the chance for appearance of cosmic adapters. Of course, common knowledge dictates that the lower the level of the civilization, the shorter the amount of time it has spent away from its home planet. This is a contrary proposition because the two variables balance each other out. After a deep calculation, we know that the highest probability rate for appearance of Cosmic Adapters is one over ten million, and the smallest is one over one hundred million.

"Cosmic Adapters are life forms that have completely adapted to life in space. They have a great sense of general space and can easily adapt into 3d, 4d, and even 5d spaces. They have great reflexes and the ability to sense another life form's mal-intention. They also have a certain degree of predictive power and affinity to the sciences. Other than this, Cosmic Adapters are the one exception and unilateral proof to the Law of Conservation of Life.

"The reason why they are exceptions is because when a civilization has Cosmic Adapters, even if there is just one, then the civilization can absorb the soul energy from the cosmos itself, enabling the newborns of that civilization to be exempted from the Law of Conservation of Life.

"The unilateral proof is because when a Cosmic Adapter dies within a society with a vibrant population and birth rate, then there is a good chance there will be a new Cosmic Adapter among the newborns. This has been proven to be true because so far, the only Cosmic Adapter at the Shelter has been reborn at least thirty generations before the lineage disappeared. In other words, the Cosmic Adapter also follow the Law of Conservation of Life, albeit in their own unique manner."

When Yao Yuan finished reading, his knowledge about Homo Evolutis increased quite a bit. First, when humanity left Earth, the technological level wasn't high, only at 3rd revolution, not even at the level of 4th revolution that was normally required for a civilizations to venture into space. Secondly, humanity relied on space warp to leave. This was the best way for mankind to put distance between themselves and Earth.

When the Hope left Earth, it only warped three times. The first warp probably still left the Hope close to Earth, so the amount of Homo Evolutis awakening wasn't so big. The number of awakenings was probably so drastic this time because mankind had warped for quite a times. Each space warp brought the Hope further and further away from Earth. According to the calculations in distance, the Hope was so far away from Earth that it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say the Hope might have already ended up the other end of the cosmos. Therefore, even though mankind's technology had increased, it was offset by the distance, thus creating this giant influx of Homo Evolutis.

Yao Yuan continued reading.

"Cosmic Adapters are divided into different levels as well. First, there are cosmic adapters below the S level. According to their ability to absorb soul energy and personal prowess, they are divided into Type A, B, and C. However, their cores aren't changed. These are the Survivors. The Cosmic Adapters that have undergone changes in their genetic make-up are the Level S Cosmic Adapters. They are the Time Watchers (Diviner), Wave Function Savants (Seeker), Infinite Fighters (Perceptor), Academics of Dark Science (Whisperer), Soul Webbers (Anima), Artist of Logic Concepts (Thinker), six Level S Cosmic Adapters.

"Beyond that there are the legendary double S Cosmic Adapters, the Immortals, the Originators, and the Curators.

"Other than the cosmic adapters below Level S, these nine Cosmic Adapters have the ability to evolve. There are five stages of evolution, but we have too little information on these...

"We have discovered that when Cosmic Adapters below Level S are given the chance to visit a second life-giving home planet, then they have a good chance of evolving into Level S Cosmic Adapters or beyond. Of course, this too needs require further confirmation..."

Yao Yuan was taken aback when he read this. He immediately pulled out the fever patient list and he found a few unique names among them. One of them was the only Survivor who had survived the ambush of the space merchants, the only Survivor that survived in Ying's group.

"Ran Zhu Yi, Black Star Troopers, Survivor, currently under observation for high fever..."

Chapter 264: Stop to Plan

When Yao Yuan finished reading up on all the information regarding the Homo Evolutis, or Cosmic Adapters, four hours had passed. He lifted his head and realized that many people in central command were yawning.

Actually, the many important departments on the Hope had set up a good rotating system before they left Earth. Normally, there would be four or five shifts in a day, making sure the departments were manned every minute of the 24 hours.

However, during emergencies, like wars or disasters, the worker number requirement would be unusually high since every important panel required one or two standing at the ready at every moment. This was especially true for the Hope's central command, the heart of the ship. The workers here weren't numerous enough to afford more than the normal day and night shifts. Therefore, most of the people there had been working continuously for more than ten hours.

At that moment, the second surveillance report had arrived. It provided the details of the space within a hundred light-years of the Hope and rough information of things that were 1,000 light years away using light scanning technology.

Broadly speaking, they were in between galaxies, so there was a lack of stars. In 1,000 light years, there were only four stars, the nearest one being more than several hundred light years away. In other words, the Hope was something smaller than a speck of space dust relative to the space around it. Therefore, it was very

safe there.

There was no danger within a distance of one thousand light years. Four of the stars were stable, young stars. The Hope picked up no suspicious gravitational waves or impulse sources. In other words, there was literally nothing around them, nothing to provide resources, and at the same time, nothing to cause danger.

Currently, the Hope wasn't in need of incredible encounters, and that could last for several decades, since the Hope's focus then was to dissect the information taken from the space merchants and grow. With enough time to percolate, humanity would break through the 4th revolution and enter the 5th revolution and join the ranks of level 3 space civilizations.

The cosmos was a harsh place to survive, it was a jungle. From the information given by the space merchants, Yao Yuan further confirmed that the weak had no place in space. Their only use was being slaves or soul energy material. Level 2 space civilizations were the lowest in this food chain, and for a semblance of safety in space, one needed to enter Level 3.

Therefore, a quiet piece of space like this might prove to be incredibly beneficial...

Yao Yuan sent out his orders through central command, announcing that the Hope was to return from alert to a normal state. The curfews and safety protocols would be resolved. Most of the working hours would revert back to normal. Other than key departments, all the rest would return to 8 hour shifts. Everyone could finally rest.

This order made many tired faces sigh in relief. After that, the luxury items on the Hope started to sell out. Items like meats, seafood, fungus, and wine were running out. People were purchasing these items in droves for celebration.

When Yao Yuan was reading back the information on the Law of Conservation of Life and Homo Evolutis, he was treated with this news of item shortage. Thankfully, the Hope had many supplies. When they left the new planet, there was an overflow in stock, so Yao Yuan immediately had the warehouse opened and a large amount of supplies returned to the market.

For the rest of the day, Yao Yuan gave no new orders. After dealing with all the assignments that had piled up, he returned to rest. It was the day after, when everyone had rested, that Yao Yuan called for a meeting with Guang Zhen, Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, leaders from the Academy, Speaker Matt, civilian representatives, and important government officials to discuss some things in the fifth floor central meeting room.

Yao Yuan was the first to start. "I decided to have the Hope stop in this spot for quite a protracted time; it might be more than five years."

The whole room, other than Ren Tao and Xiao Niao, who nodded knowingly, was shocked. Even Guang Zhen was taken by surprise. He was the first to retort, "The closest star system to us is 100 light years away. There is no reason for us to stay, so why are we staying?"

This question was on everyone's minds. They couldn't understand why Yao Yuan would come to this decision when there was literally nothing around them, no benefit for the Hope to stay. The star system that was 100 light years away would require ten years of travelling to reach even if they used the newly-acquired warp drive technology. So why should the Hope stay in the middle of nowhere?

Yao Yuan was not surprised by this reaction. He knew his decision would receive many detractors. He replied quickly, "Before I explain myself, I would like to pose the room a question. What was the ultimate goal for us when we escaped from Earth? Space warping constantly and even pushing ourselves into war feverishly?"

Everyone paused to contemplate. Many different answers appeared. Some said it was to survive, others to advance the civilization. Eventually, the many answers were distilled down to one. The answer was simple, it was so that humanity could continue its lineage and for mankind to discover a new home planet, a planet that could provide them with the comfort of a wide sky and blue sea.

"That's right, our ultimate goal is to discover a new home planet to populate and then have our future generations carry on the torch of humanity on that planet. How close are we to that goal?"

Yao Yuan continued as he looked down from his podium, "We have actually achieved that goal with the discovery of the new planet. It had a blue sea, green grass, and a perfect wilderness, but what happened? We were forced to abandon it due to the

appearance of a neutron star fragment, just like we did on Old Earth. We are again a space nomads, and so what awaits us next? If we're lucky, we might find another home planet after innumerable warps, but what if the fragment appears again? We run again?"

At this point, the room was silent. Only Yao Yuan's voice drifted on, "Therefore, our experience tells us that the only way for us to achieve our ultimate goal is to be stronger. We have to have the 5th, 6th, 7th, or even 8th industrial revolutions' technologies should another neutron star fragment incident arise to threaten us! Or else, this game of loss and gain will be continued indefinitely! Is that what all of you want?"

"Putting all of this aside, discovering another new home planet is even more difficult than winning 10 lotteries at this point. We will have to leave that to fate; it is out of our control, but if that is the case, we should make use of this opportunity to focus on things that we can control..."

"The space merchants were really something else, weren't they? A race with more than 50 percent retards, a lack of disciplined military, a civilization that has languished for generations in peace, a civilization like that managed to push humanity to the brink of extinction. Even now, when I think about how close we were to being wiped out, my heart chills..."

"They had technology slightly better than ours. In fact, they themselves hadn't entered the Level 3 space civilization stage, and yet they could have us cornered so perfectly. Now do you all understand the power of science? It is the true power in space! To be honest, I believe there is something larger than life looking out

for us, because we managed to survive after so many space warps. This time we got off lucky, but what about the time after this one? Or the one after that? Who knows where we will land next. What if it's near a black hole? I admit the possibility of that is low, so let's consider a scenario that's more plausible. What if we land near or right in the middle of a Shelter?

"Do you think that with our current power we can protect our people should the worse happen? I don't think so, and if that's the case, that would be when we humans face extinction!

"So now, do you understand why we have to stay here?"

Yao Yuan took a pause to press something on the podium. Soon after, a giant chart appeared on the screen behind him.

"This here is our current technological tree. I will not get into the technologies from the first, second, and third revolutions. These were our own discoveries, so we have full understanding of them. The issues lie with the 4th revolution technologies. The information from the space merchants have aided us a lot in further breakthroughs, but our overall process is only at 1/10. Let's not get started with the four technologies from the 5th revolution. We have no clue how to even approach those...

"Therefore, what we need now is time for us to crack open the mysteries of these new technologies...

"We have enough supplies to last several hundred years in this empty space. We have enough technological information for us to

break through into a Level 3 space civilization. We have Homo Evolutis to evade the Law of Conservation of Life, so I have to ask...

"Why shouldn't we stop here for a period of time and stave off the exploration of space until we become a Level 3 space civilization and have at least enough power to defend ourselves?!"

Chapter 265: Arrangement

Even though the Hope had a democracy, as long as it didn't involve something humongous, Yao Yuan had the power to decide everything on the Hope. Of course, Yao Yuan knew there had to be limits to his power. Therefore, other than emergency situations like war, famine, or disasters, he would not rely on his power. Instead, like this time, he would convince the crowd with his words, and many did end up agreeing with him.

One of the first reasons was the wealth of supplies on the Hope. When the Hope planned to leave the new planet, a variety of minerals were mined, smelted into ingot form, and stored. For example, the most important metals were distilled into their purest form using electrolysis from the 4th revolution. Materials such as these were innumerable on the Hope.

After all, the Hope was 35,000 meters or 35 kilometers long. Furthermore, after the latest upgrade, the Hope had added several new levels, making it about 800 meters tall and 2,400 meters wide.

Of course, compared to the space merchants' mother ship and the junkyard civilization's main battleship, it was relatively tiny, but this was the biggest size mankind could achieve with 3rd revolution technology. In other words, this was the biggest mechanical creation in human history. For the people back on Earth, the Hope would be something akin to a miracle.

Thus far, the Hope's population was at 217,000 people, including the newborns. Realistically, the 90,000 children did not occupy much space, but from this perspective alone, it could be seen that

the future population of humanity would have an exponential increase. Due to this, when mankind left the new planet, they basically carried with them everything they could and more. With the advent of the 4th revolution, many materials could be recycled, and the materials on the Hope could be used for at least 100 years as long as the population maintained at below 300,000 people!

Therefore, stopping for five to ten years in space was a non-issue.

The second reason would be the necessity of stopping in space. Just like how Yao Yuan described it, the cosmos was too dangerous a place for humanity to wander around aimlessly. Even after taking the technology left behind by the junkyard civilization, the Hope still fell into dangerous situations many times. In fact, mankind should count themselves lucky that they stumbled into the space merchants that were on the downward spiral, or else extinction would have awaited them. Therefore, stopping for five to ten years in relatively peaceful space to improve humanity's technology was beneficial and necessary.

Just like that, the proposal to stop for five to ten years was quickly approved. In truth, many people sighed in relief when this proposal came to pass. After all, the incident with the space merchants had scarred many people due to the war. They wouldn't mind having a breather period to bolster the strength of humanity first.

A period of peace had arrived. Even though the peace was temporary and precarious, many, especially those that were fatigued from war, had the best sleep they had ever had in a long time. Of course, while the civilian sighed in relief, the same

couldn't be said for the government.

After the proposal was passed, there were many things for the government to handle. The first was arrangements of work and rationing of resources.

Stopping in space meant no exploration and space warping, so there would only be a decrease in food and energy and no increase. Therefore, a deficit was inevitable. Of course, the government had to make sure that the market wouldn't collapse from inflation. However, steps like limiting monthly purchases of luxury items had to be done. Of course, while the limitations wouldn't be too severe, one couldn't buy them limitlessly like before.

Secondly would be arrangements of occupation. Since they would be stopping for a long time, stations for the purpose of war would gradually be cut down and the people would be siphoned into service roles that would increase during peace time. There would also be a general lowering of working hours so that the citizens had time to attend school or seminars to improve themselves.

The last and definitely not least was the scientific knowledge system. The current scientific knowledge system used by mankind could be roughly sourced from three origins. First was all the knowledge below the 4th revolution that was brought from Earth.

Second was the 4th revolution technology taken from the junkyard civilization. However, since parts of that civilization had already been demolished, the technology wasn't complete. Parts of the information were missing. Therefore, mankind needed to use

deduction to study and aid the missing technology before they could be used. This was because the Academy predicted mankind needed another 50 years before they could use weapons like the Genesis.

The third would be the technology given by the space merchants that bolstered the 4th revolution technology tree and four 5th revolution technology pieces. The Academy couldn't tell for sure whether this meant that the 4th revolution technology tree was completed or not, but it was undeniable that the scientific knowledge they got from the space merchants was a lot better than the ones from junkyard civilization. Now they only needed to study both in earnest.

Above were all the scientific basis humanity currently had. They were also the reasons Yao Yuan decided to stop in space. According to his discussion with several leading scientists, in around 3 years, mankind would successfully enter the middle stage of the 4th revolution, and another 5 or 10 years after that, mankind would reach the peak of 4th revolution and they would be able to create and work with technologies from the 5th revolution.

Therefore, Yao Yuan poured a lot of effort into the advancement of science. He fulfilled the Academy's every demand, like building new scientific devices, sending them more materials, and permission to use the central mainframe. Other than that, a new group of interns would be added into the Academy to breathe new life into the system.

The last would be the arrangement of the three Whisperers. Since they were different from normal scientists, having them

research and study existing information seemed to be a waste. Therefore, all three of them were tasked with researching the higher end of the scientific spectrum. Their research direction was different according to their fields of expertise, but the unifying similarity was that all three of them were researching technology from the peak of the 4th revolution or early 5th revolution.

Yao Yuan had done everything he could about the sciences, bar getting into it himself. While it was true that he had part of the Whisperer's power, it didn't seem like it did anything for him. Scientific research was not combat, and it required a large amount of scientific knowledge and a drive in research. Yao Yuan could understand science but not do research on it.

When all of these decisions were made, the Hope had stopped in the area for three days. Finally, Yao Yuan and the government officials could sigh in relief. However, this was not break time for Yao Yuan yet. For the past three days, every night he returned home, he would pull out a large amount of reading material given by the space merchants to study. Gradually, his understanding of the wide cosmos increased.

The morning of the 4th day, he called Ren Tao and Xiao Niao to his room. He needed the two Thinkers' help to categorize the information.

"First, about 60 percent of the information can be released to the public or even kept in the public e-library. At least the public can familiarize themselves with the cosmos, to prepare themselves for our future contact with other space civilizations...

"Another 30 percent will be locked behind a higher reading privilege, viewable only by senior government officials, representatives, ranked soldiers, and scientists.

"The other 10 percent will be completely sealed with confidentiality above grade A. Only the speaker of the house, military majors, and the highest government officials can view them..."

Yao Yuan turned to the two. "This is the reason why I called for the both of you. I hope you can help me improve these demarcations, and another thing is..."

"I think I've found the Hope's future target, or rather, I've found the fastest way to become a Level 4 space civilization!"

Chapter 266: Ruin

The information sent over by the space merchants was incredibly large. A part of it was completely useless as well. Information like the different surnames of alien civilizations had completely zero uses for humanity, and information like this covered up to 30 percent of the total information.

To categorize this information, using the central mainframe would be a good idea. However, the computer didn't possess an AI, and even if it did, it was only a first-level AI. It had no creativity and imagination; it would only follow the designated program. AI like that wouldn't be able to sift through the information effectively.

For example, one or several details hidden in the information about an alien civilization's myths might be important to humanity. After all, from the collected information, most of the alien civilizations had left their mother planets for more than ten thousand years. Many of them were on their downfall. They were clueless to the antiquated civilization of their ancestors and treated many of them as myths. Therefore, mankind perhaps could get useful information from their myths.

It was because of this that categorization of the information was not a simple ordeal. It required a large amount of manpower and time. Yao Yuan's intention was simple, he didn't ask Ren Tao and Xiao Niao personally go through the immense amount of information but required each of them to set up a team, and with the two teams' cooperation, finish and assign the material's level and reading requirement.

The two thought about it and accepted Yao Yuan's offer. After all, Yao Yuan was the captain of the ship, so unless it was an absolutely crazy order, they really had no choice but to accept it. With that out of the way, Yao Yuan carried on to discuss the real reason why he had brought two of them there. It was about the fastest way for humanity to become a Level 4 space civilization that he spoke of.

"I believe both of you understand the meaning of humanity becoming a Level 4 space civilization. The power for self-preservation aside, the key point of a level 4 space civilization is the ability to use wormhole technology. Even though wormhole is not space warp, it has plenty to do with space technology. Creating wormholes requires that knowledge, and we happen to need this knowledge. After we know more about the space warp technology, it probably means that we'll be able to have a more direct control over the space warp process. Imagine, we can go anywhere we want in the cosmos, isn't that exciting?" Yao Yuan exclaimed, with excitement in his eyes.

The two looked at each other and Ren Tao scratched his ear helplessly. "Of course we understand the implication, but Captain, you have to understand that we humans have just barely become a Level 2 space civilization. I know we have more than enough knowledge to help us maybe touch the edge of Level 3 space civilization, but have you considered the possibility of us not going over the threshold? Science is not politics or military; the scientists can't just make something happen just because you order it so. I simply can't figure out any method that can help us become a Level 4 space civilization in a short period of time."

Yao Yuan nodded. "Which brings me to my next point. Of course I understand that science is different from politics and military, it is an entity growing outside of human control. I'm not that arrogant to think I can have science under my control. I mean to pursue this through another means, namely... ruins!"

"Ruins?"

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao looked at each other again. Xiao Niao couldn't stop himself from saying, "You're treating this thing as a game? Speaking of which, this Cosmic Exploration OL has been going on for 11 years. Our human race civilization level is still so low, only trained until level 2..."

"Be serious." Yao Yuan frowned, then he continued seriously, "I'm not kidding, I'm talking about actual ruins... Do you still remember the history mentioned by the space merchants?"

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao nodded in unison, and Yao Yuan continued, "I flipped through the information they sent and realized that the cosmos is not as empty as we think. If there was no Law of Conservation of Life, then we would be able to witness alien life forms all around us. This isn't the case because these civilizations have started to deteriorate several thousand, tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of years ago.

"While the life of that race itself might perish, their creation and civilization products haven't. Especially in a space like the cosmos, the creation might be preserved forever until a giant catastrophe happens to it..."

"From the space merchants' information, I realized that fully-grown space civilizations, or civilization that have left their mother planet for more than 3,000 years and have no more cosmic adapters among them and deterioration was still inconspicuous, would normally go into one of these 4 different routes for survival. First are ones like the space merchants. They trade with other civilizations to increase contact with others.

"Second are mercenary civilizations. They pride themselves on attacking Shelters or other races. Normally, members of these civilizations are blood-thirsty and have a long warring history, perhaps going back to when they were still on their home planet.

"Third are research civilizations. They are not good at warfare but instead are good at scientific research. They are peace-loving and choose to avoid conflict if possible. Deterioration will also take the longest time to appear in this kind of civilization. They mostly survive in Shelters and use their creations to trade provisions with merchants or mercenaries...

"Fourth are the ones I'm interested in. These are the explorers...

"One key feature of this civilization type is their longevity. From the information I've read, a common explorer civilization can last as long as several tens of thousands of years. This kind of civilization visits Shelters once in a blue moon to conduct large-scale restocking and can survive independently in space for more than ten thousand years. Their main mission is to use warp drive to scour the cosmos, and what would they be looking for?

"Ruins! Ruins left behind by other civilizations that have fallen under the Law of Conservation of Life!"

Yao Yuan stopped to pull out a piece of information from the computer screen. "This here is a report on a legendary explorer civilization. According to this report, the civilization was lucky enough to stumble across the ruins of a space civilization that was at the brink of entering the 6th revolution. The life forms had all perished and the mother ship had been destroyed by a natural space disaster. However, even so, it allowed the explorer civilization to gain lots of 4th and 5th revolution technologies, and they themselves had evolved into a Level 4 space civilization before going on to become level 5 in the future.

"I believe this is the best future route to be taken by the Hope!"

At this point, Ren Tao's and Xiao Niao's eyes were shining. Xiao Niao said excitedly, "I had no idea this Cosmic Exploration Online had such cheats... Fine, I'll be serious, this is indeed something we've not considered before. You're right. As you've said, under the influence of the Law of Conservation of Life, space civilizations are constantly dying off. Other than the civilizations at the Shelters, what happens to those middle-level and high-level civilizations? They seem not to be at the Shelters, and they too are not free from the law's influence. In other words, if we can find these dead civilizations, like the junkyard civilization, then our level will indeed get a giant increase!"

"What about the risk?" Ren Tao frowned and asked. "Don't tell me there is no risk. Even when we were dealing with the junkyard civilization, there was a giant risk. In fact, it almost caused our

extinction, and those were only the ruins of a level 2 space civilization. I can't imagine ruins for a higher level civilization will be safer."

"Indeed, there are risks, and very high risks if I might add." Yao Yuan didn't try to soften the blow but said openly, "This is to be expected. After all, even a difference in one revolution could mean the difference between two eras. Furthermore, this is space civilization levels we are talking about. A random object from a Level 3, 4, 5, 6, or even 7 civilization might cause a civilization-wide extinction. Therefore, I'm not denying there is a presence of great risk."

"Then what is there for us to discuss?" Ren Tao shrugged. "Randomness is the biggest danger. The possibility of us running into such a ruin aside... I mean, the Hope has space warped god knows how many times before we came into that junkyard civilization. Even if we find one, do you have the courage to send your men to investigate it? What if it sets off some defense system that can wipe us out? Is the risk really worth it?"

"I understand the risk involved, which is why I've brought the two of you here..."

Yao Yuan smiled. He turned to Ren Tao suddenly and said, "If we do come across such ruins, Zhang Heng's Diviner power is not strong enough to tell what level space civilization it is. We need someone with a sense more acute than our most powerful Diviner... Ren Tao, tell me about the little girl by the name of Eva. I'm very interested in what she does. I read something similar in the space merchants' information. She sounds like a Diviner that

has evolved into its third stage...

"A level 3 Diviner, or we should no longer call her that because such a Homo Evolutis' power is dubbed...

"The Sage!"

Chapter 267: The Sage Eva

Little Eva's parents were incredibly worried because their daughter had been asleep for more than half a month. From the month the space merchants infiltrated the hope, little Eva started sleeping. Before sleeping, she even left her family with some cryptic words. Her parents thought she had contracted some weird disease, like psychological trauma or some unknown virus.

Little Eva's grandfather was Earth's famous physicist Silewei. He was also the Hope's most influential physicist, the leader of the Academy's physics faculty. He was one of the crucial players on the Hope, his power greater than some of the Hope's government officials. This was because the space merchants' information greatly inflated science's importance, and that greatly increased the Academy's stature. In fact, even if Yao Yuan had found out Silewei had misused his power, as long as it wasn't totally out of place, then there was a chance Yao Yuan would pretend he didn't see it.

Luckily, Silewei was one of the traditional, serious scientists. He treated his research seriously and had self-discipline unique to the Germans. Actually, many of the top scientists were like this. Their focus was on their scientific research, and very few of them were concerned with position and power. Those that were didn't last long in the Hope's scientific system.

Little Eva's sickness was the first time Silewei had technically misused his power. He used his influence to locate all the best doctors on the Hope to treat Eva. He even managed to get Ivan and Saburo to help him. However, even with the best medical devices, they couldn't diagnose her illness, and she remained unconscious.

The Hope had stopped in space to enter a great scientific renaissance, but Silewei had shed about ten kilograms right before everyone's eyes. His appearance, which was being monitored by the genetic mesomeric technology to revert to a middle-aged man's appearance, started to undo itself. Silewei started to rapidly grow old. He and his family were in the throes of despair because they couldn't even detect any sickness or poison in Eva. That was the scariest part because this meant the thing that affected little Eva was something couldn't be identified and consequently cured by current human technology.

Therefore, when Silewei saw Yao Yuan, Ren Tao, and Xiao Niao heading towards him, who was at the ICU, he said listlessly, "Captain, I know why you're here. I will return to my lab in a minute. The physics faculty needs me, but please just let me stay with my granddaughter for a while longer."

Yao Yuan and the two thinkers were shocked. Yao Yuan quickly explained, "No, Prof. Silewei, you misunderstood the meaning of my presence. I'm not here for you, but your granddaughter, Eva. It concerns... something important."

Silewei too was surprised by this revelation. He suddenly realized who the three people standing before him were. One was the Hope's Captain, the only All-Rounder, and the other two were the Hope's incredibly rare Thinkers. They were all valuable assets to the Hope. The fact that all three of them were there... Could it be that they knew how to treat little Eva?

Ten minutes ago, Ren Tao revealed to Xiao Niao and Ren Tao his

memory of Eva's actions. During the war with the space merchants, the key to victory was the team led by Ying. Even though the Black Star Troopers' contribution and Ying's self-sacrifice were crucial to the victory, all of that wouldn't have happened if not for that baby dragon at the beginning. The Hope might have defeated the infiltrators, but in the end, it would've only been shot down by the Requiem.

The question became: how could Eva have predicted all of it? Why would she hand a baby dragon to Ren Tao, who had no relation to her? How did she know that there was a hidden mal-intention behind the space merchants' invitation? How did she know that the baby dragon would help the situation?

Not only this, there were also other extenuating questions. For example, the baby dragons were all well protected. A common civilian wouldn't be able to get close to them, so how did she manage to sneak one out?

Ren Tao had discussed all these questions with Xiao Niao many times before. According to logic, what she did was impossible under normal circumstances. Therefore, the only possibility left was... Eva knew all this would happen, so she prepared accordingly. Handing Ren Tao the baby dragon might seem insignificant in the grand scheme of things, but it was because of that one small action that the whole result of the war was turned around. Eva must have been able to see into the future to be able to accomplish something like that.

In the space merchants' information, Diviners like Zhang Heng were called Time Watchers. However, there was no clear

elaboration on the origin of the Diviner's power, or even any scientific basis to their existence. In fact, they only provided the basic elaboration of their powers. Needless to say, information on the three double S grade Cosmic Adapters was basically non-existent.

In the space merchants' information, they also talked about normal Cosmic Adapters, or Survivors. They had a small chance of evolving into S grade Cosmic Adapters, while S grade Cosmic Adapters themselves wouldn't be able to evolve into the legendary double s grade Cosmic Adapters but instead they had their own leveling system. The actual leveling method was unknown though.

According to myths, Cosmic Adapters had five levels, levels 1 and 2 were one tier, levels 3 and 4 were another tier, and level 5 only "possibly" existed. For example, the first tier of Diviner was called Diviner, but second tier Diviner would be named the Sage.

According to Ren Tao and Xiao Niao's hypothesis, Eva most likely was a level 3 Time Watcher. If that was true, her importance could rival that of Yao Yuan, if not over him!

When they reached the ICU, they stumbled across Silewei, who was visiting his granddaughter. The trio was startled because they suddenly realized that Eva was Silewei's granddaughter, and this cautious and stern physicist was someone even Yao Yuan needed to be respectful towards.

Silewei didn't stand on ceremony and asked directly, "Captain and two Thinkers, you told me you're here for my granddaughter, so I have to ask, can you cure her condition?"

The three looked at one another and Ren Tao interjected, "Prof. Silewei, can you tell us a bit of Eva's symptoms?"

Liking discovering a savior, Silewei quickly told them about little Eva's condition, especially bringing up how her fainting spell coincided with the war with the space merchants.

The three nodded knowingly. Yao Yuan walked to Eva's side and put his hand on her forehead, saying, "If that's the case, then it shouldn't be something wrong with her body. This is something to do with her Homo Evolutis power. As we know, after over-exertion of Homo Evolutis power, there will be a period of compulsory down time for recovery. For some, it might be a coma. I guess we need to give her more time to recuperate..."

However, before Yao Yuan could finish, he felt a small and weak fireball rush through his arm into his soul. It then circulated around the giant orb of light that represented his soul. In just seconds, the small fireball returned to its original brilliance and in fact started glowing. After about ten seconds, the glowing, small fireball finally departed from his soul with reluctance. At the same time, Eva's eyelids started to flutter.

The other people in the room didn't notice the changes on Eva. From their perspective, Yao Yuan had put his hand on Eva's forehead and then he practically froze. Silewei thought Yao Yuan was checking Eva's temperature, while Ren Tao and Xiao Niao, who understood Yao Yuan had no medical experience, knew better. Something must have happened.

Xiao Niao asked immediately, "What's wrong? Yao Yuan, what did you find out?"

"He found out about his other power, the power charger."

A crisp voice said, with a giggle. Before anyone in the room could react, the previously unconscious Eva sat up with a charming smile. She tapped Yao Yuan's hand, which was still on her forehead, and said, with a girlish chuckle, "Captain Uncle, it's illegal to have such close contact with an underage girl, you know?"

"However, I do need to thank you for helping me, or else I'd probably need another three to four months before I could wake up. Right, the question you came to ask...

"You're right, I'm a Homo Evolutis, one that has visions of the future. You can refer to me as the Sage."

Chapter 268: Strength and Limitation

Eva's awakening undoubtedly brought Silewei and her family immeasurable joy. She knew she was perfectly fine, but she still went to the hospital for a check-up, overwhelmed by her family's demands. After the hospital confirmed she was healthy, her family finally sighed in relief.

That afternoon, Eva changed into a frilly dress and skipped joyfully as she walked in front of Yao Yuan, Xiao Niao, and Ren Tao. They were at the third floor's merchant street as per Eva's demands. In truth, Eva was shopping, while Yao Yuan was paying.

"I know what you guys want to ask..."

Eva licked the ice-cream cone in her hand and suddenly turned towards the three men. "You're right, it was around the second or third day after we left new planet that my Homo Evolutis awakening occurred. However, since I was the only one on the Hope suffering from a fever, and I didn't go unconscious but only felt listless and tired, my parents didn't think I was awakening, so they gave me medicine and had me sleep all day."

Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, and Yao Yuan's interests were piqued, because everyone's awakening incurred a coma. When they woke up, they were already a Homo Evolutis, so they had no clue what exactly happened during the awakening, but now standing before them was an exception.

Yao Yuan asked immediately, "Is that so? Then what was it like

during the awakening? Can you tell us?"

"Lonely," Eva answered without hesitation like she had been waiting for the question from Yao Yuan. "I was conscious throughout the experience. Both my parents and grandparents had to work, especially my grandfather; he was the busiest of them all. I was lying in bed alone. The fever made me so weak that it was hard to reach for the cup on the bedside table. During that vulnerable period, a surge of loneliness overwhelmed me.

"I felt alone, as if I was the only life form habituating this wide cosmos. Everything around me was so cold, so distant, and so full of danger..."

The trio looked at one another. They knew about all this already. Even though the period of awakening was spent in a coma, Homo Evolutis, as long as they were not Survivors, would remember the feeling of helpless loneliness acutely. The feeling was less pronounced among the Survivors; only a handful of them would retain the memory of experiencing these things.

Ren Tao frowned and pressed, "You were conscious then?"

Eva nodded confidently. "That's right, I was definitely conscious. I know what you mean, how can a conscious person experience so many vague emotions like it was a dream? The only thing I can say is that I really felt all these things, like I was being hypnotized. It is incredibly hard to explain, but I can guarantee I was 100 percent conscious."

After Eva said that, Yao Yuan asked, "Then what happened next? The next second you just became a Homo Evolutis?"

Eva shook her head with a smile that quickly disappeared. Her tone became unusually serious. "Of course not. After that, it was like a layer of membrane appeared before me..."

"A layer of membrane?"

The three knew this was the information they needed, so they focused to listen to Eva's every word.

"That's right, a layer of membrane that was there and also not there. I could feel the membrane enveloping me, giving me warmth and safety, but at the same time, I felt uneasy, like it was constricting my freedom. I wanted to get out of it so badly. Of course, like I said, I was weak from fever. I was conscious but couldn't perform any giant movements. The membrane was incredibly tough and appeared to be everywhere. This lasted for who knows how long, but when the Hope performed another warp, I realized that the membrane had become thinner, as if it could be broken through with a rough shove..."

"Distance!" Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, and Yao Yuan said in unison.

Indeed, one of the rules for Homo Evolutis Awakening was the further the civilization was from its home planet, the greater the probability of its citizens awakening, and there would be a high chance of awakening Grade S Cosmic Adapters and even Grade SS Cosmic Adapters.

According to Eva, after the Hope's warp, the ship must have landed further away from Earth. That confirmed the awakening rules for Homo Evolutis because it caused Eva to fully mature into a Homo Evolutis; it was the reason she got out of the membrane. She was already a Level 3 Time Watcher when she awakened.

With the question regarding the awakening out of the way, the next would be the key question the three were most interested in, something that was crucial to the development of the Hope and humanity... the usage and power of the Sage's power.

"You want to know about the Sage's power?"

The four of them found a small café and sat down as they questioned Eva on this issue.

Eva used a small, metallic spoon to stir her coffee. She thought about it and said, "The supposed power allows me to see visions of the future. However, most of these visions make no sense. For example, I saw a long corridor and Captain Uncle leading a bunch of people through it, brushing shoulders with a delegation from the space merchants. After that was a vision about you going towards the negotiation center to demand information about the mysterious code that shut down the central mainframe. The group of space merchants suddenly rioted, and even though you managed to kill them all, the one alien that crossed your path earlier had gotten away. After receiving the news, he used a long-range remote to format the Hope's central mainframe..."

Yao Yuan shuddered. He thought back to the first negotiation with the space merchants. He was indeed on the way to demand information from the space merchants but had slipped on a glass pebble on the corridor. Because of that, he saw the derision in the alien merchant's eyes, which caused him to change his mind. Instead, he turned to the Academy and Workshop to get the experts to work on cracking the code on the central mainframe.

"That was the vision that I saw. According to this development, even though Bo Li's alien robot would forcefully hack into the central mainframe to override the space merchants' influence, by then half of the Hope would have been dead, including my parents and grandparents. That future was too scary, so I had to change it. I tried many ideas, but the only one that could change the future was to let you see for your own the space merchants' evil scheme."

Yao Yuan narrowed his eyes. "In other words, it was you who left the glass pebble on the floor?"

Eva giggled and pointed at Ren Tao. "It was also me who passed Uncle Ren Tao the baby dragon."

Ren Tao scratched his nose and said, "Uncle...? But I have a question, do you have to use your own eyes to check the future you see? Or is it more spiritual than that? You have not been to the space merchants' mother ship, so how can you possibly tell the future that happens within it?"

Eva shook her head. "It's very feeling-based. Honestly, I too am stumped by this prediction power. Many times, it is simply out of my control. For example, I would like to see my parents and

grandparents' futures, but I can't. This is not a controllable power, or rather not a fully controllable power...

"But I can clearly see the future of every Homo Evolutis on the Hope. If I think about their name and face, then the vision of their future one month from now will appear in my mind. Of course, those appear in isolated visions as well. In fact, the stronger the Homo Evolutis, the clearer my vision. For example, like Captain Uncle here, I can even see what time you're going to take your shower for every day of the next month."

Little Eva winked at Yao Yuan mischievously. Yao Yuan blushed unexpectedly. He quickly changed the subject. "What about the Survivors?"

"Same thing, but the visions that I have are fewer. Actually, I can see into normal people's futures as well, but the visions are even fewer."

Ren Tao suddenly asked, "Then why would you go into a coma? According to what you said, you can see into the future whenever you want. If that is the case, you should have gone unconscious many times already, so why go unconscious only for the latest one?"

"Because of the change."

Eva sipped her coffee and frowned. She added three sugar cubes and continued, "Having visions of the future will not cause weakness, but changing the future will. Furthermore, the greater

the change, the larger the amount of people affected, and the weaker I will become and the longer my coma will last. At worst...

"I will die."

Chapter 269: Rules and University Admission

"In conclusion, the Sage's power has to follow these four rules. One, the future events or people observed by the Sage must be related to the Sage. Two, the clarity of future observed by the Sage is strongest on Double Grade S Cosmic Adapters and weaker on normal citizens; the more powerful the target, the clearer the vision. For normal citizens, the Sage has to meet face-to-face to activate its power. Three, the Sage can't control the future seen. It might be completely insignificant or absolutely important. The future seen could happen in the range from the next 24 hours to a month. Four, the future can be changed, but the bigger the change involved, the greater the damage it will have on the Sage. The damage could be large enough to kill the Sage!"

Ren Tao scratched his head and said, "These are the four rules that I've managed to categorize so far from what you've told us. Of course, there might be hidden powers to the Sage that we haven't discovered. Eva needed to discover those on her own; furthermore, the ability to change the future is simply too powerful. This is something Eva needs to conduct in-depth research on."

Eva shrugged and waved her hands in mid-air. She offered a girlish smile and said, "I'm not a Thinker, so don't force me to categorize my powers or design the future, because that is the role of you Thinkers. Pushing them onto me is borderline child abuse, and I will sue! Furthermore, there is only one me but two Thinkers. Well, two and a half, since Captain Uncle can be considered half a Thinker."

A visible vein popped on Ren Tao's forehead when she said this. Even though there were two and a half Thinkers, Yao Yuan naturally couldn't put down his other responsibilities to accommodate Eva. Xiao Niao was a military major and the leader of Kurosan Ren-sei. He and his two best friends had perfect cooperation and were the star pilots within the Black Star Troopers. Kurosan Ren-sei had started to make a name for themselves and thus was often tasked with training new pilots. Therefore, Xiao Niao couldn't escape from Eva's demands.

In comparison, Ren Tao was more "otaku" in nature. As long as there was no active mission, his preferred activity was to let his Thinker's power go to rest, sleep in some high places, read some of his old novels, or eat his sister's home cooked meals. That was the life he loved the most. However, Eva's appearance meant his lifestyle was in danger...

Actually, this was something they had discussed earlier. Eva's power was simply too incredible. It was not something science could explain or replicate. Of course, perhaps those godlike civilizations could still do something like this, but it was definitely impossible for Level 4 and 5 space civilizations. Ren Tao and Xiao Niao came to this conclusion that eventually Yao Yuan reached as well. What was the meaning of the ability to see into the future?

It meant that the Hope's safety was guaranteed to a certain degree, this was the most important one. There were other opportunities one could draw from this power, because being able to see into the future was an incredible cheat.

Of course, to perfectly utilize this power, other than reaching

into the future, one also must be able to analyze these visions expertly, especially with regards to forming strategies. For example, if Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, or Yao Yuan had seen the same visions Eva saw, then there was a high possibility they would've come up with a plan that could dominate the space aliens without one human death.

When Eva heard this accusation, the smile froze on the young girl's face and she offered with anxiety and fear, "Because I'm not sure what effect my actions will bring... Don't underestimate me, I'm a university student, and I've read the related books on the topic of timelines, like Chaos Theory and the Butterfly Effect. A small change could cause a big difference in the future. When I saw the vision of the space merchants attacking, it was only a few days away. I'm not a Thinker, and as I've said, I can't control the visions I see, so I committed to the two things that I felt would change the future the most. One was to pass Ren Tao the baby dragon that would eat through the metallic tentacles, and the other was to make sure Captain Uncle saw the space merchants' hidden intentions. I couldn't figure out a better plan. Plus, I couldn't have just come to you guys, could I?"

Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, and Yao Yuan sighed continuously, but they couldn't fault Eva. After all, she was still young and not a Thinker. She was a new Homo Evolutis at the time, a completely new type of Homo Evolutis at that. The girl also admitted why she hadn't come clean to Yao Yuan about her power. She was afraid her power wasn't real and it was her going crazy. The negotiations with the space merchants was incredibly important, so if it turned out that it was just her psychosis talking, then she would be the biggest sinner against humanity. Finally, she had no choice but to act on her own.

After a discussion between the three, Ren Tao was selected to be Eva's personal Thinker. Whenever Eva saw a suspicious vision of the future, she could contact Ren Tao through the phone at any time and Ren Tao had to pick up the call no matter what. This arrangement annoyed Ren Tao to no end.

No matter what, Eva's arrival greatly improved Yao Yuan's anticipation and excitement. The Hope had birthed a level 3 Time Watcher. This was instrumental to the future development of the Hope, especially with regards to his ruins exploration plan.

Of course, this needed some more planning. At the same time, Eva's Sage power and cooperation with Ren Tao needed a long period of training. This plan would take hundreds of years, so it was not something that could be rushed.

Something that was imminent was the Hope's scientific development plan. Three new universities for education of general science were built. Their target students were the general public.

The Hope's general public were experts from all walks of life when they were still on Earth, from business, politics, language, law, and many more. After all, the adult population of the Hope was 120,000 people. That was not a small number, and almost everyone had graduated from a famous school. They were all intellectuals; however, due to the fragmentation of their school of studies, the number of scientists on the Hope was actually lacking. The Academy only had less than 5,000 people, including the interns.

Yao Yuan hoped the Academy's number could reach one-tenth of

the Hope's total population, which would be 20,000 people. Of course, this was not to say that the larger the number of scientists the better because the true importance was quality not quantity. The scientific contributions of great scientists like Newton, Einstein, and Hawking couldn't be replaced by numbers. However, the current situation on the Hope was a bit unique. They had just acquired almost all of the scientific theories for the 4th revolution and some for 5th revolution. In this case, numbers became important because numbers decided the efficiency of the Academy understanding these technologies. Therefore, having at least another 10,000 scientists with basic scientific knowledge was the Hope's best current alternative.

Therefore, Yao Yuan poured in assets and manpower to build three general knowledge universities on the Hope and started recruiting students from all over the Hope. As long as the age was over sixteen and they had a high school diploma, be it one from Earth or the Hope's high school, then the person was qualified to enroll in these three schools. The tuition was free and there would be monetary prizes for top students.

The three universities would teach subjects like biology, physics, astronomy, and the likes. Of course, the rudimentary classes would be equal to introductory courses in normal universities. From there, students with good marks would be picked out to enter intermediary classes, while the rest continued studying in rudimentary classes. The talents would be sifted through layers. The hope was to train the talents that were unfortunately eclipsed when they were on Earth, while simultaneously raising the scientific knowledge of the general public.

The learning process would last for two to three years and the

best students to come out of this system would be enrolled into the Academy. They could be great scientists in the future if they worked hard enough. The average students needed to sit for a final exam, and if they passed, they would be awarded with a graduation certificate.

To increase the public's desire to further their studies, Yao Yuan decided to provide some incentives. For example, better job treatment for workers with certifications. Workers with related certificates would receive 20 percent better treatment compared to others at the same post!

Money talks, Yao Yuan believed, and very soon the three universities would be overflowing with experts from all walks of life. He was praying for the appearance of an Einstein-level genius among the university students, because if there was...

The Hope would have hit the jackpot!

Chapter 270: The Hope's Fourth Upgrade (1)

Time zipped past and the Hope had spent one and a half months in the empty space. The one and a half months had been a taxing time for the Hope's higher officials. They wished they could split themselves so that there would be more of them to go around.

Setting up the three universities took up the bulk of their time. The universities, albeit they wouldn't be as prestigious as most of the universities back on Earth, each of them had a large roster of faculties, like physics, astronomy, math, and even general sciences. The equipment required alone was enough to give the higher officials a headache.

Truth be told, with the Hope's 4th revolution technology, creating the high-end equipment used back on Earth was a cakewalk. They could be completed within days. For example, the Large Hadron Collider was the top piece of equipment from the 3rd revolution, and even Earth's 21st century technology needed several decades to build it. However, for the Hope, with an electromagnetic blueprint and 3D printing, it could be built within days. The replica would have a 0.1 centimeter difference from the real thing, and they could be produced en-masse. This was the power of advancement in technology!

Therefore, the real cause of headache for these officials was the scientists had pinpointed their desire for equipment matching the 4th revolution!

For example, there was a device called the super electromagnetic string oscillation recorder. It was a device that could test the

validity of string theory. More than a simple mechanical marvel, it required electromagnetic shock implantation.

This was a technique available only after the middle stage of the 4th revolution. Such a technology did exist within the Hope's library of knowledge, but it was still incomplete. To be precise, the technology had recently been discovered, so they had to create a few early 4th revolution products first before it could be assembled.

And such a device required about 30 plus early 4th revolution products!

It was obvious that most of the equipment requested wouldn't be used by the universities but the Academy, but the leverage was with scientists because they insisted that the equipment was necessary for classroom experimentation. If the officials wanted to combat that, they would have to teach the classes themselves.

The scientists seemed to be collaborating among themselves, because the equipment they asked for could still be built by the Hope, only they would require a large amount of time, manpower, and materials. These were not high end fourth revolution products that were impossible to build. Therefore, even Yao Yuan relented. The Workshop increased to their maximum productivity, and OT was a common occurrence during the one and a half months. Finally, most of the simple equipment requested by the scientists was ready two weeks before the semester started. There were about ten complicated devices left unfinished, and Yao Yuan decided to play rogue with the scientists. He told them directly,

"I promise we will complete the rest in the next 6 months. The government and Workshop's productivity is only so much because we also need to keep an eye on civil affairs, food and luxury items storage, farming, and maintenance of this ship. If you're unsatisfied, then why don't you come and govern instead?"

The scientists were forced into submission by the same tactic they had used earlier. The second month after the Hope idled in space, the first batch of students started their enrollment. There were about 10,000 students. The number might seem small compared to the total population, but one has to realize that even though the Hope had 210,000 people, around 90,000 were newborns, so the amount of adult citizens valid to enroll in school was about 120,000 people. Within that group, around 20,000 people were already members of the Academy, Workshop, and Barracks.

Furthermore, the Hope required a set number of workers to for the sake of maintenance and sustenance. For example, the farmers, breeders, maintenance workers, and service providers. The remaining people might not all enroll in school because a large portion of them consisted of elderly people who no longer had any interest in pursuing an education.

Therefore, 10,000 students were more than enough to make Yao Yuan and the professors excited. Plus, this was only the first semester. The number of students might increase in the future because if the Hope idled for five to ten years in space, the eldest group of newborns would be in their early teens, and they would benefit from these three universities. Therefore, in a way, the construction of these three universities could very much welcome a new wave of intellectuals to the Hope!

After the three universities started school, the Hope's government finally got the time to take a breather. However, before they could relax, Bo Li, like she was playing a prank on them, revealed to the government that she had cracked the nanobot technology, and more than that, she had come with a proposal for the Hope's fourth large upgrade!

Thus far, the Hope had undergone innumerable small upgrades, but only 3 large upgrades. The first was to upgrade the energy circuit to solve the issue of mass during warp. The second was after the junkyard civilization, when the Hope was fitted with Gaussian weaponry, creator's particle, and the ECS system. The third was before they left the new planet, to solve the limited storage space on the Hope and to prepare for future population growth.

Above were all the three major upgrades undergone by the Hope thus far. Bo Li's fourth upgrade would be the first actual large-scale upgrade because it would take more than 10 years to complete!

Using 4th revolution peak technology to conduct an overall upgrade on the Hope, the top and lowest levels of the Hope would be enlarged and the Hope's defense space on the side would be widened. Furthermore, the four 5th revolution technologies would be added to the Hope with this upgrade, meaning the Hope could space warp as well as warp drive!

This upgrade would take more than 10 years!

Chapter 271: The Hope's Fourth Upgrade (2)

Bo Li's proposal baffled and befuddled Yao Yuan and the government officials. Everyone thought her plan was a bit too out there. Based on the Hope's current condition, the most they should do was add a few weapons, not something so drastic.

However, Bo Li's single sentence made everyone speechless. "You people really think the Hope is so invaluable?"

Bo Li glanced at Yao Yuan before turning to face the higher officials and engineers that eyed her with doubt. "The Hope is a 3rd revolution product. To put it simply, it is a spaceship used to travel within the solar system. Its size, space, and structure are all at the 3rd revolution stage and suitable only for travelling within the solar system. Space catastrophes and space wars weren't part of the concern when the Hope was designed, or perhaps they were, but it couldn't be done with only 3rd revolution technology."

The engineers nodded along to her words.

It was worth noting that even though the Hope had just entered the 4th revolution a few years, the party that benefitted the most was definitely the Academy. Like sponges, the scientists learnt everything they could from the new technology. Next would be the engineers. They too had learned a lot from the new technology, stuff like structural integrity and construction knowledge. In fact, when they landed on new planet, the engineers had approached Yao Yuan with the same concern, the Hope wasn't suitable for long-distance travel through the cosmos. However, due to the arrival of the neutron star fragment, they didn't have time to build

a new main spaceship. Therefore, they settled with three smaller spaceships to earn some experience. According to these engineers, from the perspective of performance, the Observer as well as the Defenders 1 and 2 were much better than the Hope.

Bo Li continued, "Now that we have the nanobot technology, albeit it'll still be years before we can completely understand it, after we do so, with enough energy and materials, we can create the perfect main spaceship in a short amount of time. Therefore, before that, this upgrade proposal I'm giving you is practically the last upgrade for the Hope. This fourth upgrade will be the last upgrade on the Hope; it will be best thing we will have at least for an extended period of time..."

Yao Yuan understood the underlying meaning. He quickly asked, "Wait, do you mean we won't understand the nanobot technology anytime soon?"

Bo Li replied firmly, "That's right. The 4th fifth revolution technologies, after several months of trial and error, we've come up with a conclusion: they will remain a mystery without us stepping into the peak of 4th revolution first. We are unable to understand anything. Of course, copying them according to the blueprints available is still technically possible. This is doable for the other three technologies, but it will be difficult for the nanobots because it involves too many other technologies. One is electromagnetic wave energy converter, another is nanobot's creation manual, and lastly is the nanobot's AI. These three technologies alone are not replicable from blueprints only. We have to have complete understanding of the theories behind them first. Therefore, nanobots are impossible at least for the next 20, 30 years."

Since Bo Li had said so, Yao Yuan had come to a decision. Spending five to ten years in that empty part of the cosmos was already stretching things thin. Adding another 10 years to that would not only lower the morale but also exhaust the storage of food and energy. They also had to take into consideration the issue of increased population. Therefore, the idling period had been set at 5 to 10 years.

In other words, this fourth upgrade would possibly be the last upgrade on the Hope until they could use the nanobot technology to build themselves a brand new spaceship. Therefore, spending ten years to upgrade the Hope might not be a bad investment because the Hope would have to last them for another 20 to 30 years.

Just like that, a few days after the universities were completed, the Hope's fourth upgrade was entered into the schedule...

Chapter 272: Compulsory Military Service and Face-Slapping

Before the three general universities finished being built, the third batch of 500 plus Homo Evolutis had started to awaken. The final survivor number was 490 people.

With the advancement of technology on the Hope, its medical science had also gotten far more advanced than when it was on Earth. Generally, if the person hadn't lost his breathe for more than 10 seconds or the brain received irreparable damage, then the technology definitely could save the person's life. Even if there was nothing but the brain left, as long as the brain was still functioning, then the person could be saved. That was the power of the 4th revolution's medical science!

However, the Homo Evolutis awakening didn't seem to be controlled by modern medicine. Other than checking for amelioration of internal hormones, blood, physical condition, and genes, the stuff that caused the changes itself still remained elusive. Things like how to ensure the Homo Evolutis survived this ordeal or how to make the Survivors into Grade S Cosmic Adapters were mysteries as well.

Therefore, of the 500 plus Homo Evolutis, only 490 survived. After the importance of the Homo Evolutis was found out, this was more than a simple loss of life. Everyone sighed in regret. If this news was released into space, it would probably make all of the Level 9 space civilizations cry in tears.

Other than that, it was worth noting that of the 490 people, 23

were originally Survivors. They had woken up to become Grade S Cosmic Adapters. For example, Zhu Yi became a Seeker.

Of the 490 people, removing the 23 who were already in the Black Star Troopers, the remainder contained 262 male whose ages ranged between 28 and 40. Due to the effect of the genetic mesomeric resonator, these men were at the height of their health. In other words, other than a few cases, the Black Star Troopers would receive about 250 new members!

250 young men in their prime, all Homo Evolutis joining the Black Star Troopers, it was unimaginable!

The original Black Star Troopers at its maximum only had 150 people, and this was the best military unit on the Hope. No matter whether it was from the perspective of grounds warfare, ambush, zero-gravity combat, or piloting Prototype 003s, the Black Star Troopers were undeniably the Hope's best fighting force. 150 troopers were enough to sway the tides of the battle, much less 350 troopers! This was going to be the envy of all the other civilizations.

Of course, not all the awakened Homo Evolutis were willing to answer the military's call, at least one-third of them gave multitudes of reasons to avoid it. Of course, the actual power of these Homo Evolutis had to be checked out first before any arrangements would be made. The government had to filter out the rare Whisperers, Thinkers, and Animas, and of course the All-Rounders and Deceivers as well.

The final conclusion was that there were no new Whisperers or

Thinkers, there was only one new Anima, Luo Mao Miao. Naturally, there was no new All-Rounder or Deceiver. Most of them were Perceptors or Seekers. They made up 90 percent of the newly awakened Homo Evolutis. A small portion was found to be Sages and the rest were Survivors. All of this information was recorded within the Homo Evolutis Faction's files and then was sealed.

After that, members of the Black Star Troopers' recruiting department spent most of their time arguing with the Homo Evolutis who avoided the call. Until the first week, where the Hope's fourth upgrade was put into motion, one-fifth of the Homo Evolutis refused to answer the call. This situation finally arrived at Yao Yuan's and Guang Zhen's tables.

"...The Homo Evolutis who rejected the recruitment call were all from Country Z."

Guang Zhen sat across Yao Yuan with a drawn expression. They were in Yao Yuan's captain's room, and Guang Zhen was there that day to discuss the rebuild of the Defense Unit and Black Star Troopers. Guang Zhen brought up this issue of people avoiding the call then.

Yao Yuan was reading through a giant stack of documents. They involved matters pertaining to the three universities, civil affairs, updates from the Academy, and the Hope's fourth upgrade. In other words, he had spent most of his days reading these documents, so there was no time for him to even rest.

When he heard Guang Zhen's words, he lifted his head up in

surprise. "This group of people is still so stubborn? Didn't they hear about the better and improved version of the Black Star Troopers' benefits?"

Guang Zhen chuckled bitterly. "How could they not? The second version of the Black Star Troopers' benefits has been posted all over the Hope. All Black Star recruits will be given the rank of corporal, and when they finish training and become actual troopers, their rank will increase to sergeant. Each small unit's leader will be a second lieutenant, the middle-sized units' leaders will be lieutenants, and each battle unit's leader will be a captain or a major. At the same time, the troopers will receive the benefits his military rank entails. Other than that, the troopers will be enrolled into the national supply system. No matter whether it's pre or post retirement, dead or alive, as long as the trooper answered the call, his whole family will be entitled to government monthly support and massive tax cuts. This is all common knowledge by now."

Yao Yuan nodded and said, "With great power comes great responsibility. The Black Star Troopers in our foreseeable future... or perhaps for a long stretch of time, even when the Hope's population reaches more than a million and the Defense Unit numbers grow to more than ten thousand, the Black Star Troopers will be the Hope's main fighting force. Similarly, the greater the responsibility, the better the benefits, so we mustn't mistreat our soldiers. However, this seems to go beyond the issue of benefits provided."

Guang Zhen responded with an affirmative nod. "That's right. I've visited a few families that rejected the recruitment call, and since we are all Z Country men, they've revealed certain things to

me... No matter how good the benefits, one needs to be alive to enjoy them. That is what they told me."

"Not only that." Yao Yuan shook his head. "There is also another key reason. When we were back on Earth, Country Z didn't have a compulsory military service due to its massive population. Several hundred years of that system has instilled in their minds that military recruitment is optional. We mustn't let this go on."

Yao Yuan stood up suddenly as his Thinker power kicked into high gear. The one-fifth of the Homo Evolutis who rejected the call were under many people's scrutiny, and the people who were watching were waiting to see how Yao Yuan would react.

In reality, even though the Hope had left Earth about eleven years ago, the new generation hadn't replaced the original generation yet. The zeitgeist of the day still remained at the so-called "Earth Thinking".

This was not a defamatory word because it reflected reality. Be it language, religion, race, or culture, the Hope was delineated into many groups. The most obvious example was at the lower 4 residential levels, whose areas were separated into Asian streets, Westerner streets, and African streets. There were even European cultural spots, Country Z cultural spots, Middle Eastern cultural spots, Japanese and Korean cultural spots.

Even though Yao Yuan had the highest prestige and ruling power on the Hope and that power was accepted by 99 percent of its citizens, citing him as a good leader, not lesser than the great leaders Earth once had the fortune to welcome, many still felt he

was too lenient towards County Z's citizens.

One example of preferential treatment was the adoption of Chinese as lingua franca. This was a source of contention among the public for a long time and was finally settled when Yao Yuan chimed in.

However, the compulsory military service was something agreed upon by the majority of the Hope, thinking it as a compulsory measure. Now that it was being challenged by the Country Z men, Yao Yuan could already imagine the many European representatives rubbing their hands in a cartoonish evil manner, waiting for him to do something stupid and fail.

"How idiotic..."

Yao Yuan smirked and told Guang Zhen, "Ol' Wong, go on and inform this group of Homo Evolutis that their choices now are either to face jail time under the charge of violating the Hope's institution and sinning against humanity or they join the troopers voluntarily. Give them three days to decide, and don't be too soft on them. The compulsory military service is a must, No matter what skin color or nationality you are!

"At the same time, the planned face-slapping project can also be initiated now."

The moment the face-slapping project was mentioned, Guang Zhen was stunned. He asked in a hurry, "Initiate the plan now? Isn't that a bit too soon?"

Yao Yuan laughed. "No, the time is ripe. This group of Europeans is too dumb, crossing my bottom line so many times. If they were as reasonable as Speaker Matt, then I would have relented and catered to some of their demands, but they are nothing but swines that lust after power...

"The face-slap has to be harsh to let them know that their sins are equal to those of the Country Z representatives!

"Therefore, initiate the face-slapping project that has been in planning for the past 10 years!"

Chapter 273: Project Face-Slap

Before the Hope left Earth, according to the discussion between Yao Yuan and his men, half of the population they rescued would be from Country Z and the other half from the rest of the world.

This decision had already created a great psychological pressure on many westerners. For example, many European scientists were worried Yao Yuan would use Country Z's administrative pattern to govern them after they got on the Hope. However, since the Hope was their last saving straw, they had to submit to such a treatment even if Yao Yuan did decide to do so.

To their pleasant surprise, even though the Hope's political and military powers were concentrated in Yao Yuan's hands, he wasn't a dictator as they feared. There were neither harsh policies nor propaganda-style governing. Other than the centralization of power, Yao Yuan was fair and accountable. At least among the Hope's citizens, they didn't mind Yao Yuan having most of the power, because that had allowed him to help the Hope survive many ordeals.

It had been eleven years since the Hope left Earth. It was not a short period of time. How many ten year periods would a man have in his life time, well, before the genetic mesomeric technology, anyway? In these eleven years, Yao Yuan's name had pervaded into the hearts of almost everyone on the Hope. There was a belief that as long as Yao Yuan was alive, the Hope's government would not go corrupt. It would continue to be a responsible and transparent government. Of course, because of this, the Hope until now had one-third or even more people still feeling guarded against Guang Zhen. They were extremely afraid

Yao Yuan would suddenly pass away and the Hope would enter anarchy under Guang Zhen's hands.

At the same time, since Country Z's politicians were infamous for their bribery and more than half of the Hope's population was from Country Z, they were extremely afraid that oppressive aristocrats would appear once more on the Hope. Therefore, when the Hope's government came into being, none of the Country Z's government workers were allowed to hold the highest office posts. Of course, they could join politics, but they had to start from the bottom. However, due to the difference in political systems between Country Z and the rest of the world, when the House of Representatives opened its doors, not many Country Z politicians threw their names into the hat. Of course, there was also another reason, which was even Country Z people didn't trust their own politicians.

Therefore, until now, while the Hope had many ex-Country Z citizens working at the middle to low level of the governmental structure, there were none occupying the top. The only exceptions were Yao Yuan and Guang Zhen. The rest were all military soldiers.

So far, this arrangement had kept peace on the Hope for as long as eleven years. When the Hope's government was formed, Yao Yuan made sure to involve as many westerner politicians as he could, to let them realize that he was not there to lord over them. They too saw that Yao Yuan's name, power, and loyalty in the people were true and unmovable, so they had given up on the idea of sabotaging Yao Yuan from within. Instead, they cooperated fully with Yao Yuan to bring about prosperity to the Hope. That was completely different from the small time representatives that tried

to smear Yao Yuan's name at every turn.

The main ploy of this group of people was to poison the minds of the general public, praising the qualities of a democratic society and slipping in the fact that since the westerners were the ones to champion this sort of governing pattern, it would be more effective if the government could also be changed accordingly. Furthermore, this was a contingency plan just in case Yao Yuan suddenly dropped dead. It would be better for them to govern than allow the Hope to fall into complete anarchy.

In these eleven years of peace, this sort of talk had surprisingly found a foothold within the general public. Their most impressive feat was influencing even the Country Z people. After years of repetition, history lent weight to their words...

These people failed to see that it was precisely because Yao Yuan was the leader that they were allowed to spread these incendiary rumors. If not, would things be as easy for them?

Yao Yuan had noticed this development a long time ago, but he didn't intervene, he didn't even say a word. Politics were not war. With his great reputation, he could have hinted at the House of Representatives his displeasure and such opinions would disappear, but it would have been sown into people's hearts and eventually it might grow into something insidious. Yao Yuan needed to dissolve such thoughts within people's minds and hearts as well, which was why he came up with Project Face-Slap that was ten years in planning!

James pressed on the door bell and a middle-aged American

woman opened the door from within. Her face lit up when she saw James. "Mr. James, we've been waiting for you. Quick, come in, you're late."

James chuckled and didn't explain himself. Instead, he sniffed the air. "This is a good quality Cuban cigar. There shouldn't be many in stock anymore, I'm surprise John could still get his hands on some. But it looks like the party has started without me."

James followed the middle-aged woman into the living room. The Hope's residences weren't big; most had one living room, one bedroom, one kitchen, and one bathroom. There were a few larger residences with more bedrooms reserved for larger families of course.

Since the Hope was first built, Earth's government officials couldn't have thought it would become the home for the largest group of human survivors. Therefore, the setup was not particularly suitable for family living. Instead, there were quite a few luxury condos, probably reserved for high ranking officials like presidents. However, after Yao Yuan gained the Hope, these places had all been redesigned to fit other purposes. Yao Yuan didn't plan to take these luxuries for himself or anyone else, because they would serve a better purpose if redesigned into different spaces.

In the end, the Hope had only a few of these luxury condos left. They were left behind to be reserved for families with over 9 members, and the residence James had arrived at was one of those.

James was a member of the House of Representatives, and the

residence belonged to the vice department manager of the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Also in attendance were three or four representatives or government officials who knew each other.

It was a common occurrence for colleagues to get together for a gentleman's day off at the end of the day. This was something the westerners like to do, to discuss issues over drinks and cigars. It was something similar to how Country Z's officials would discuss issues over meals.

When James walked into the living room, four men were already sitting on the sofa. Their wives were in the next room talking amongst themselves. When James joined them, they greeted him before enquiring the reason for his tardiness.

"What else? Got stuck at work. The speaker wants me to collate all of the civil disagreements over the last half a year and send them to him. Speaking of which, the year 12 is almost here, perhaps it's time for a year-end review. This means that the Hope's bureaucratic ordeal will be increased. I have to say, our captain sure is a workaholic, because he seems to be quite uncomfortable when he has nothing to do."

This made the room laugh. Then they continued to talk about something else. Someone roughly brought up the reelection that would be coming during the year 12...

The atmosphere was light and fun. It was almost dinner time when someone knocked on their door. This shocked the room because who would be disturbing them during dinner time?

The hostess went to get the door, and standing outside of it were a few soldiers and a captain. The men saluted when the door was opened. "I'm sorry, but are Mr. John, Aron, James, and Albert here?"

The hostess was shocked when she laid her eyes on the group of men in military fatigues. She only managed to nod dumbly when the soldiers read the men's names.

"We are from the Discipline and Inspection Office. We hope the four gentlemen will follow us to our office, because we have some questions for them." The captain nodded politely at the hostess before barging into the room, ignoring the fact that she was standing fully in the way. Her face was pale.

The four in the living had heard what the men said. None of their expressions were pretty. It was not at the stage of despair, but there was definitely shock and disappointment. The host's, John's, face was the most pale.

However, the four didn't put up any resistance. They followed the soldiers obediently.

This situation repeated itself all over the Hope. 80 percent of the people arrested were westerners and were in some ways related to the most powerful representatives or government officials...

A tornado fighting the supposed "democracy," "freedom," and "modernization" of the west was sweeping through the Hope...

Chapter 274: Give in Order to Take

Lee Cheng Wen was a government official from Country Z. Before the Earth's catastrophe, his rank had already reached prefecture-city level customs bureau's head personnel. His age was only 46, a veritable youth among his peers.

Cheng Wen didn't come from an aristocratic family or married someone influential. He reached his stage by slowly climbing the administrative ladder. Those that didn't know him thought it was because of his ridiculously good luck, but some knew it was because he was a hero who could rule the world. Of course, this was an exaggeration, but they would all agree that he was definitely a character!

Cheng Wen's favorite pastime was to read ancient literature, especially books by Lao Zi. He always told his twin that life is like reading a book, cause the books would always teach us how to act, as history tends to repeat itself. However, Cheng Wen was sort of a prude, because he was ethnocentric even in his reading materials. Only ancient Chinese texts had wisdom in them, and those written by other barbaric races didn't.

Cheng Wen's son, Li Jing, had always argued with him about this point, especially bringing up the Han Dynasty's downfall around the seventeenth century. Other people's cultures weren't as bad as Cheng Wen made it out to be.

Cheng Wen would go silent every time he was faced with this argument; therefore, Li Jing stopped bringing it up, thinking it might have offended his father somehow.

Deep within Cheng Wen's heart was a seed of sorrow. He was brought up by his grandfather, who was a famous private school teacher during the period prior to the Red Revolution. Therefore, he was taught a lot of classical thoughts. Cheng Wen was a natural learner; he had always managed to thwart his grandfather in class. His grandfather used to say that if he was born 500 years earlier, he would be someone like Zhu Ge Liang, or at least a learned man like [Xun Yu](#).

Cheng Wen had mastered the Han's antiquated thoughts before he reached age thirty, and very often, the question of why the Han Dynasty had gone into downfall would come up in his mind.

This was a big question pondered upon by many men from Country Z, the Qing Dynasty, and New Country Z. Why was it? Why would such a glorious dynasty face downfall when mankind was entering the modern era?

Cheng Wen thought that the Han Dynasty didn't start to face its own downfall near the modern era but rather during the Tang Dynasty.

The fall of the Han Dynasty was definitely not because, as many charlatans had said, of Confucianism. While it was true that there was no cultural explosion after the unification of Confucianism like there was during the Warring Kingdoms era, Confucianism too had been changing ever since its conceptualization.

What is Confucianism?

Human need is Confucianism!

Confucianism changes according to human needs. This was a philosophy most suitable for human society's development because it was the most inclusive and deep philosophy there was. As long as the society needed it, it could change to fit the agenda of the day. Therefore, it wasn't Confucianism itself that killed Han Dynasty, the real killer had used Confucianism as a prop to achieve its own goal.

Then who was the real killer?

Cheng Wen thought it was conceitedness from assuming oneself was the best.

Ever since the Tang Dynasty and the Song, Ming, and Guang Dynasties following it, Han culture had been unbeatable. Other than the actual Han Dynasty, there was no civilization equal to the level of Han culture. The barbarians couldn't do it, and the Europeans couldn't do it either. There was no civilization on Earth that could rival the glory of the Han culture. No matter from which perspective, the best civilization on Earth was definitely the culture of the Hans.

In conclusion, the Han's pride was not something that could be put into words. Calling itself the Kingdom of Gods was a good try though. Of course, when one was at the top, there were no others to compare to and learn from. This was when the Han Dynasty started to fall, when it started to focus only on itself. Its growth

had gone stagnant and the Confucianism holding that was society together stopped changing.

Unlike European countries, which had never been united under the same banner, the internal communication and external communication with the Arabic countries had never stopped...

This self-seclusion could only lead to self-exhaustion. Confucianism couldn't grow tall but instead had no choice but to grow wide like [Li Xue](#) during the Song Dynasty and [Xin Xue](#) during the Ming Dynasty. In actuality, this did nothing for Confucianism. Wide growth meant more students, but the philosophy itself remained unchanged. This carried on until the end of the Ming Dynasty.

Following the European Renaissance, the other civilizations started to catch up to the Han culture. With the advent of long-distance sailing, the communication between the Hans and the rest of the world began. This communication reached its peak during the end of the Ming Dynasty. At that time, many scholars saw the catalyst needed for improvement in Han culture. This was observable from the beginning of capitalism and scholars of Confucianism realizing the new changes in their studied philosophy.

However, at that time, the biggest threat to the Hans appeared on the scene, the Mans, the Qing Dynasty... had arrived!

In the 300 year period when the European countries were undergoing a metamorphosis, the Hans started to collapse...

The Han culture was completely destroyed during that 300 year period. What remained? Foot-binding? Qipao? What else? Were these the things that defined the glory of Han Dynasty that lasted for thousands of years? How laughable!

After losing the essence of the Han people, in recent years, the people started to turn outwards to look for new cultural inspirations by turning to the west. In reality, ever since the Qing Dynasty, Han culture had completely been unrooted. For example, was the new Z Country really a Han product? No, it was nothing more than an imported good...

Therefore, Cheng Wen realized that the real killer of the Han people was self-reclusion, and this started during the Tang Dynasty...

He fully believed that if given the same resources, the Hans packaged with the thoughts and learning of ancient China would definitely crush the white-skinned people like bugs!

Ever since the beginning of the Hope's government, Cheng Wen was a small level Hope government official worker. He worked tirelessly without complaint. He was a man of few words, but his every word was loaded and to the point. Slowly but surely, his rank started to rise. Thus far, other than people like Yao Yuan, he was the highest ranking Han in the Hope's government, and also one of the few Hans actually working in the government.

Many Han public officials like himself always complained to him

about Yao Yuan's policies, especially the one about all Chinese people having to start from the bottom rung of the administrative ladder, during meals. How was it that the government, which was in Country Z people's hands, had all the higher officials be westerners? It was the same thing with the House of Representatives. The speaker was white, 70 percent of the representatives were white, and the rest were Asians from other countries and Africans, only 1 percent was pure-bred Han. Why was that?

These complaints entered Cheng Wen's ears after he had a small fever. It was a fever that lasted only for several hours. Even though it was during the period when the Homo Evolutis awakening was happening, Cheng Wen's wife and kids didn't think it had anything to do with Cheng Wen's fever, because Cheng Wen's fever was too short and he was wide awake through the whole process. Only Cheng Wen himself knew that he had become a Homo Evolutis... a Thinker.

This was how Cheng Wen answered those complaining officials.

"...As Lao Zi once said, give in order to take."

The officials were not familiar with antiquated literature, but the phrase itself wasn't that complicated, so they seemed to have understood a thing or two...

One had to give before one could take... But what exactly was the meaning?

Cheng Wen, who was asked to elaborate, only smiled because he didn't consider it necessary to do so. Certain things had to be left unsaid. However, according to his recent observations and his understanding of Yao Yuan, the caution the white skins had against Guang Zhen and the small actions taken behind Yao Yuan's back to undermine his place, from all this he could see...

The plan that had been formed ever since the Hope's government was created.

Give in order to take...

A few months after the Hope stopped in space, the first batch of corrupted officials, including westerners, Africans, and Asians, were captured. The government asked Cheng Wen to come in to have a talk. They discussed his years of hard work and their wish to commend him. At that point, Cheng Wen knew the plan that had been in planning for 10 years had been initiated!

Give in order to take!

Cheng Wen felt especially kindred to Yao Yuan then, like finding an old friend. He had no clue whether Yao Yuan was familiar Ancient Chinese thinking, but he realized that he was using it to clean up the trash that was plaguing the Hope.

In some way, there was communication without actually communicating...

That night, Cheng Wen got himself blind drunk. The next day, the first ever label of the most honest government worker in the 11 years of the Hope's government induction was bequeathed onto Cheng Wen. At the same time, he was named the vice minister for the Hope's ministry of labor and personnel. He was going to take the position of minister until the actual minister returned from being investigated....

a strategist and statesman who served as an advisor to the warlord Cao Cao in the late Eastern Han dynasty.

a moral, ethical, and metaphysical Chinese philosophy influenced by Confucianism, and originated with Han Yu and Li Ao in the Tang Dynasty, and became prominent during the Song and Ming dynasties.

School of Mind; Neo-Confucian Idealistic School (from Song to mid-Qing times, c. 1000-1750, typified by the teachings of Wang Yangming.

Chapter 275: Balance

Speaker Matt was enjoying his afternoon tea. Facing him were four renowned representatives from the House. They were also the spearhead leaders of the "future anarchy" sect.

Yes, the Hope's political scene could be separated into multiple sects. It was only natural for places where power could be found. This was to be expected as long as there was greed in human beings, even if they were the last space travellers.

After discounting the small sects that had no influence at all, there were four powerful sects, and one was the neutrals. Their political goal was to ensure the balance of the politics on the Hope, not allowing any other forces that would tip the balance to appear. The amount of people in this sect was small.

The other was neutral with a slant towards Yao Yuan sect. They might lean towards Yao Yuan and admit him as the leader of the Hope and humanity, but they won't be singing blind praises towards him. If necessary, for the sake of the humanity, this sect would still argue with Yao Yuan. This sect had the most power and the most amount of people. The leader was Speaker Matt.

One was the anarchy sect. They planned to usurp power from Yao Yuan within as small a time frame as possible. These were the people slandering Yao Yuan's name. The number of people in this sect was low because the actions of their leaders were too obvious and had been cleaned out by Yao Yuan.

The last was the future anarchy sect...

This sect comprised of old Europeans and Americans. They currently occupied the middle and high levels of the government as well as had the greater representation in the House of Representatives. They were the only sect that could rival the neutral sect with a slant towards Yao Yuan.

Their goal was simple. Currently, Yao Yuan was unbeatable. No matter whether it was from the perspective of popularity or leadership quality, he was the best choice. He was necessary if mankind was to survive in space. To challenge and slander Yao Yuan now was short-sighted because mankind's greatest goal now was still to survive in space.

However, this didn't mean that things wouldn't change in the future!

Yao Yuan would one day die, be it from accident or natural causes. To prevent his successor from turning the Hope into a dictatorship, there had to be changes after Yao Yuan's death.

The sect's original goal was rather innocent because they knew that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Yao Yuan might be a great leader, but who could guarantee it would be the same for his successor?

The sect's original goal was to watch and prevent. It was because of that reason that Speaker Matt allowed the sect to survive, giving it the chance to grow. However, not long after that, the sect started

to stray from its assigned goal, or rather, it had been corrupted by power.

Their goal changed to being watchdogs who wanted to prevent the usurption of the power of the government after Yao Yuan resigned. They had to steal the power from Guang Zhen. A large part of them had the stereotypical thinking that all Asians were selfish, immoral, and had a tendency towards dictatorship. Weighed down by the white man's burden, they decided to save the Hope from such a future.

Therefore, they started unconsciously or consciously spreading the rumour that the reason the Hope's government could be so fair was because most of the government comprised of westerners...

Speaker Matt was an old politician. When he started playing the game of politics, most of the representatives were probably still in their mothers' wombs. Therefore, how could he not have seen the corruption of this sect's goal? However, he decided to stay his hand. He might not know the teachings of Lao Zi, but he understood the theory of giving in order to take. The sect had changed and had become a hidden threat for the Hope. One couldn't spook them before uprooting them with one fell swoop. Plus, he didn't think Yao Yuan hadn't noticed this either.

After all, this sect had violated his bottom line. They came after his assigned successor, and Guang Zhen's position couldn't be challenged, so this offense was even bigger than slandering his name directly.

"I can't help you." Matt took off his glasses and used the cloth to

wipe the lens as he told the few people before him.

They were all sweating, and a middle-aged man practically begged him, "Mr. Speaker, I admit there are a few bad apples among us, but the majority of us are good people. The government can't possibly punish all of us simply because we had a few meals with these few apples before. Plus, I hate to say this, but this is exactly what we were afraid of. Isn't this an early sign of dictatorship..."

Matt glanced at him and said, "Preposterous! Whose dictatorship? If there's a dictatorship, there wouldn't be a House of Representatives and no chance for the lot of you to get corrupted! Do you really think I'm that stupid? Don't cover up your actual goal with flowery words, like caring for the safety of humanity and the like. I'll be frank, with the power of military in your hands, what is even humanity anymore?"

Matt sighed. "Actually, you know what? I too have been nursing a constant worry, not about Yao Yuan's dictatorship, because underneath his exterior lives a kind heart. Unlike us, he is not a political player, not because he doesn't know how to, but because it is below him to do so. This is why so many of you were taken down by him. You people have underestimated him.

"So you do know what my worry is? My worry was us westerners becoming too powerful."

Matt ignored the shocked faces of the representatives and continued, "What is politics? Politics is balance! When one party has absolute say, it is no longer politics, and that will more often

than not devolve into anarchy. Currently, the Hope cannot afford an anarchy. Have you people seen the statistics? Currently, 80 percent of the representatives are westerners or have deep relations with westerners. The positions in the middle and high levels of the government, especially all the department leaders, are all occupied by westerners. This is the reason why your sect could get so big and eventually got corrupted.

"This is no longer a balance. I worry that one day the troopers will rush into our homes with guns blazing. I'm not kidding, because at least I know a few of you have already gotten your stubby fingers into the Defense Unit. Don't deny it, and since I already know about it, do you think Yao Yuan doesn't?"

The few people there felt cold sweat all over their bodies even though the room was rather warm.

"Therefore, this time I cannot help you. If I do, then I will really have harmed the Hope. Learn when to hold them and when to fold them. Take this as a lesson and retreat while you still can, because I don't think Yao Yuan is out for blood. Retire and be a quiet teacher or worker. Or even take the time to recuperate at home. That's better than dragging the whole of humanity down with you, right?"

Matt took a sip from his cup and then said, with eyes glowing with wisdom, "I'm very satisfied with how things are going. From now on, there will be an influx of Asian faces into the House of Representatives and the government. That will be real balance. Of course, there will be small altercations in the future, but as long as nothing happens to Yao Yuan, we'll be just fine. This is good

because this is a good opportunity to eliminate the preconceptions we've brought along with us from Earth and enable us to become an actual space faring civilization. Therefore, I will not intervene in any way, so please return. Be responsible for your own actions."

It was as Matt had predicted, Yao Yuan didn't draw blood. After capturing the group of officials and representatives, a wind of honesty and dedication started to blow through the Hope. A great amount of evidence was put on display. The evidence of the officials' corruption, like forceful occupation of public spaces, occupation of condos not suitable for their family sizes, smuggling of luxury items, nepotism, and everything else, was unveiled. The punishment would be arranged next but they were mostly monetary punishments; there were no executions.

Around 80 percent of the people punished were Europeans or Americans. Through the dissemination of the Hope Weekly and the internet, the earlier speech about the superiority of the white man dissolved upon itself. Not only had Asians grown some awareness, many westerners did so as well.

At the same time, a large amount of honest government officials were commended. Around 60 percent were Asians who were low level government workers. Just like that, slowly but surely, the winds of power were changing, and no matter whether it was the government or the House of Representatives, the westerners stopped holding the majority...

After the dust settled, five months had passed. In that period of time, the three general universities had accepted around 14,000 new students. At the same time, breaking down of the sciences was

still going on. The fourth upgrade hadn't stopped. The Hope was exceptionally busy. Other than children below the age of ten, everyone was busy, be it studying, researching, or working. There was no time for leisure.

However, at a time like that, as if worried the Hope wasn't busy enough, Bo Li approached Yao Yuan with a whole new design around the end of the fifth month the Hope had idled in space. It was a new product that utilized the peak of fourth revolution technologies...

Space Combat Jet Prototype 011!

Chapter 276: New Combat Jet

The creation of the Space Combat Jet Prototype 003 enabled mankind the ability to fight in space. Before it, mankind still relied on 3rd revolution rocket fuel propulsion systems and had no transportation that was suitable for space travel.

The design of the Prototype 003 was an era-defining moment because it meant that mankind had evolved from Earth weapons to space weapons. It was not an exaggeration that ten Prototype 003s were equal to all the fire power of old Earth's military power. With enough supply of ammunition, the ten combat jets could easily destroy Earth!

Even though the Space Combat Jet Prototype 003s had been around for eight years, its quality was undisputed. Even Yao Yuan had no complaints about it because this was mankind's most high-end technological marvel that had helped mankind survive innumerable space wars. Even when facing off with the space merchants, who were technologically more advanced than mankind, the Prototype 003s managed to hold their own quite well.

In other words, Yao Yuan too hadn't thought about upgrading the space combat jets. Therefore, when Bo Li suddenly came up with such a proposal, it shocked everyone. Of course, the first thing they did was wrangle up the related scientists to create a task force to study the proposal for the new combat jets. In less than a week, the task force came up with performance report on the proposed space combat jet.

The Space Combat Jet Prototype 011 retained most of the design ideals of Prototype 003, including its maximum speed, dexterity, and weight. These things were mostly unchanged. The real change was in the energy system and super weapons system.

First, the energy system. Prototype 003's biggest weakness was on full display when mankind was warring with the mother nest alien and the space merchants, and that was its inability to last during combat. Other than the Red Lightning, which had an internal polymerized reactor, the remaining Prototype 003s relied on normal electricity storage. Even though the system was already Gaussian, greatly increasing the maximum amount of energy storage, it was undeniable that the Prototype 003 exhausted a great amount of energy.

Systems like the creator's particle vibrator, the ECS system, Gaussian weapons, particle flux accelerators, all of these required the constant feeding of high energy. Therefore, the Prototype 003 couldn't last long in a space war.

The other weakness was that the fire power of its weapons was too low. Even though the Gaussian weapons were already something unimaginable when compared to old Earth's weapons, in 4th revolution combat, the Gaussian cannon's power was greatly lacking. Penetrating other space combat jets' electromagnetic shields was already an issue, much less the shield of the main ship or battleship. In other words, the Prototype 003 might fare well when facing enemies from below 4th revolution, but they would be in trouble if the enemies were at 4th revolution or higher.

The design ideals of the Space Combat Jet Prototype 011 thus was to improve its energy storage and weapon fire power.

First, in terms of the energy storage, Bo Li suggested using plasmatic energy. Plasmatic energy was the main energy source of the 4th revolution because with the advancement in science, normal electricity, which was high voltage electricity, could no longer provide sufficient energy intensity. For example, warp drive required an unimaginable energy intensity, and this required another better energy source. It was under this situation that plasmatic energy was born.

Using a plasmatic energy generator could increase the energy storage of the space combat jets by ten to twelve fold. This would completely eliminate the problem of lack of energy, but this design had a great issue, which was when the combat jet was destroyed, it would instantly create a plasmatic explosion, melting and killing its pilot.

Of course, in the event of a space war, if the combat jet was really shot down, even without being melted, the pilot would only have a 10 percent chance of surviving. Without the ECS system and electromagnetic shield, the pilots that were ejected couldn't possibly fight other combat jets with their bare hands now, could they?

Therefore, this issue was practically a non-issue because the improvement in energy storage meant an improvement in the electromagnetic shield's efficiency as well. If anything, this increased the safety of the pilot. This could be observed from the space merchants' plate saucers. The only reason their

electromagnetic shields were so strong was because of plasmatic energy. Therefore, this design was praised enormously by the group of experts.

Next was the biggest upgrade to the Space Combat Jet Prototype 011, the super weapon system!

Each Prototype 011 would still be using Gaussian weapons, but thanks to the increase in energy storage, they would also receive an additional two railguns and one small cannon. However, these weren't the super weapon systems, they were only the normal weapon systems. The supposed super weapon system was the combination system mentioned in many of Earth's sci-fi stories!

Yes, combination!

The eyes of everyone who saw this bulged out. If they were waering glasses, they would be searching the ground for the broken pieces.

In Bo Li's design, using electromagnetic power as the main conductor, a supposed electromagnetic amalgamation would be formed. Every 3 Prototype 011s could combine with one another using this system. Three jets' energy systems would be joined and the weapons from the three would be fired simultaneously. The three would combine into one, the main control falling into the hands of the main pilot, forming a unique, large, space combat jet that still possessed the speed and dexterity of the normal Prototype 011.

Such a combined combat jet could form a large Gaussian rail cannon. After three combat jets combined, their collective energy sources could support such a large weapon and was sturdy enough to withstand the blow back.

With the future advancement of technology, the internal weapon system of the Prototype 011 could still be upgraded, like perhaps the combination could carry something as powerful as a Planet Annihilating Rail Cannon or even the Orbit Rail Cannon in the future.

In other words, this conceptual design would solve the issue of the Prototype 003 having less than satisfactory fire power. Furthermore, it allowed for room to grow, because this prototype was only good enough to handle warfare with other 4th revolution space civilizations. It could be upgraded again when mankind entered the 5th revolution.

This was the Space Combat Jet Prototype 011 proposed by Bo Li, a combat jet created for the purpose of fighting any war in the 4th revolution period. According to Bo Li, this prototype could be used until the early 5th revolution. Similar to the Hope, until the technology advanced to the 5th revolution, this would be the space combat jet they would be using.

Of course, with such a good performance, especially with the super weapon system being something ridiculous, the price was also ridiculously high. The average price of one Prototype 011 was triple the price of one Prototype 003!

The Prototype 003 was already pricey. Even though the

government didn't need to import the materials, if converted to old Earth's USD value, the technology, materials, and manpower would cost about 30 billion USD to 50 billion USD!

Of course, since the Hope already had the technology and the materials, the only cost was the workers, and their salaries couldn't possibly add up to 50 billion.

However, it did exhaust plenty of valuable materials. If all of the Hope's production power was siphoned to create the Prototype 011s, it would require about 10 days to create one, but this was with all the production power focusing on creating space combat jets! Which meant that the upgrade on the Hope and production of everything else had to be stopped, so this was impossible.

Therefore, the Space Combat Jet Prototype 011's biggest issue came from the price of production. Furthermore, the number of Black Star Troopers had greatly increased; it had reached 400 people! 400 Prototype 011s, that would take ages to finish.

The task force's conclusion was they hoped Bo Li could again repeat what she did for the design of Space Combat Jet Prototype 003, allowing it to be mass produced. To put it simply, to decrease some of its performance to decrease its cost.

However, to their surprise, Bo Li was exceptionally stubborn this time. She rejected that suggestion outright. She told Yao Yuan directly, "In any case, I've handed you the proposal and design. My work is done. It's up to you whether to produce the combat jets or not. The design can't cut corners anymore; it is as simple as it can be. Before I go, I only have one thing to ask: are human lives more

important than materials?"

That silenced Yao Yuan. Just like how it was with the Prototype 003, skimping on the production costs put the troopers' lives at a greater risk, which rather defeated the point of the combat jets.

Therefore, after the discussion, Yao Yuan signed the production plan for the Space Combat Jet Prototype 011 with gritted teeth. The first batch would create three Space Combat Jet Prototype 011. They would decide whether to mass produce them after testing them out...

It had been seven months since they started idling in space...

Chapter 277: Artificial Intelligence

Humans had limitless anticipation towards the future following the first revolution in the nineteenth century. With the scientific renaissance, it was the first time mankind saw the world in earnest free from the simplicity of common barbarians. To borrow an analogy, science was like the glasses that allowed mankind to appreciate the world in all its possibilities.

Science was the key to get into that limitless world. No one knew where the limit of science would lie or if there was even one...

Under such a situation, sci-fi became a common genre, and there were multiple predictions of the future. Some became a reality, others didn't, while the rest remained in the twilight area between the two. One such technology was artificial intelligence.

Be it the famous Frankenstein or the AI robots portrayed in famous sci-fi movies, artificial intelligence was something unreal at least in 21st century Earth. Mankind still couldn't create a new lifeform from nothing; the most they could do was to edit lifeforms via genetic engineering.

Similarly, mankind could create electrical lifeforms using electrical messages of 0s and 1s. There might've been supposed AI software, but those at the end of the day were programmed software and not sentient AI.

Many related researchers had pointed out that unless computer programming was completely changed, moving away from the

restriction of 0s and 1s, there would never be an actual AI. Similarly, some pointed out that when the AI appeared, mankind would most likely have entered the real 4th revolution.

Of course, these people had guessed wrongly, but the catalyst that propelled mankind into the 4th revolution wasn't AI but a series of technical innovations brought upon by super magnetism. However, they weren't completely wrong, because AI did take up a huge portion of the 4th revolution. It was even relevant until the peak of the 4th revolution and even early 5th revolution.

Wang Da Bing's team was one of the many teams focusing on electronics research. Currently, all of the electronics experts were separated into multiple groups according to their own languages or races, but their aim was the same, which was to break down the barrier going into first level AI, allowing the Hope to really master the complexities of first level AI.

The name Wang Da Bing sounded incredibly pedestrian. It conjured up the image of a block of a middle-aged man, like a butcher or farmer from ancient China.

In reality, Da Bing was a quiet, middle-aged man, but with the genetic mesomeric technology, he had the appearance of a 26-year-old man. He had on a pair of glasses, making him look like your quintessential intellectual teen, completely opposite from the image his name conjured.

Those that knew Da Bing knew the fiery character that hid under the quiet exterior. To be precise, he was an incredibly impetuous fella that allowed for not one bit of muddling. As a team leader, he

had butted heads with his members many times. If not for the fact that his skill was one of the best in the world of electronics and all the members were ex Country Z citizens that were reluctant to join other groups, this team would have been dissolved a long time ago.

Da Bing didn't think much of it. He was born an extremist, and his understanding had always been that there was no supposed humanity in the pursuit of knowledge. They might have been friends outside of the lab, but in terms of research, he was brutal and domineering. Right is right and wrong is wrong, there were no shades of grey in science.

This personality made life quite difficult for him back on Earth. He might have had high education and great skills, but due to his stubborn personality, he was always the target of managerial bullying. Furthermore, he didn't enjoy a good professional relationship. He was always the target of gossip and slander, but he wasn't at all affected by them. He was reluctant to change, because that was who he was.

On the Hope, due to the restructuring of the government, it was the start of something new, so there was no time for managerial suppression. Even if there was, it was barely noticeable. This was because the Hope was really a meritocracy. If you had the capability, then your position would be high.

Da Bing was the leading man in the understanding of AI. His power was even larger than the team leaders of other groups mainly because he had the ability to back it up.

This afternoon, Da Bing was still slaving away at his own lab.

Actually, other than his team, other teams were also working overtime. His team, due to the aversion of spending more time with Da Bing, gave all sorts of reasons to leave on time. As this happened again and again, Da Bing, although furious, stopped caring about the bunch of idiots and decided to rely on himself. He worked overtime until midnight every day.

However, AI research was not something resolvable alone. In truth, after science entered the 21st century or 3rd revolution, science was no longer something that could be broken through by a solitary genius. It was a group effort, which was why there was the creation of study groups to begin with.

With the advancement in science, this situation was even more common. Other than Whisperers, who could see the problem from all the angles using the Homo Evolutis power and thus compensating for the lack of a group, every single professor also needed cooperation from others to arrive at any breakthroughs.

Da Bing was impetuous, proud, and stubborn. If his team members refused to work with him, then he was not going to waste time convincing them otherwise. He was going to rely on himself to create the application of first level AI, or quantum programming.

"Bunch of idiots. Human relationships are definitely not important in science! The fact that there are so many groups ensures that there is a competition to cross the finish line first. After all, this is the creation of first level AI, something that will ensure the creator's name be listed in human history. The bunch of idiots fail to see what's at stake. Being in a team with them is a

humiliation to me! Never mind, I will work on this alone and complete it! That will annoy them to no end."

However, thinking and doing were two different things. Da Bing was talented in the field of electronics, but he was still a distance away from being called a genius. His progress was pitiable. To be honest, his team's progress was lagging far behind other teams. Da Bing was anxious, but he had no solution. At that moment, his eyes were bloodied because god knows how long it had been since he had a good night's sleep.

"Here, this program here, if we can hack through this limitation..."

Da Bing was trying his best to hack through the space merchants' quantum lock. This was the basics of AI. AI could no longer be produced by simple 0s and 1s, only more complex quantum programming. Quantum programming was something completely different from 0s and 1s, like the difference between nuclear energy and combustible energy. Da Bing tried his best to work through it, but there was little to no progress.

A few minutes later, he was faced with another failure. Da Bing almost screamed out of frustration; however, his rationality stopped him from lashing out. He started anew, but he was cursing the bunch of idiots internally.

"Actually, you're right, the world is filled with idiots, idiots that will amount to nothing. The people that can lead mankind into a bright future is a small collection of brilliant individuals. It's sad that you're not a Whisperer, or this problem wouldn't have

stopped you."

Suddenly, a female voice rang out in Da Bing's ears. He shivered all over as he turned back to look. There was nothing there. He yelled out, "Who's there?"

"I'm not physically here, so there's no need to turn around. Back to the issue at hand. You really think an individual genius is better than a group of idiots, right?" the female voice asked again.

Da Bing looked around but saw nothing. He shrugged and answered, "That's right! Science is science, and truth is truth. If we add human emotions into it, what will it become? Human rules? Boring. In any case, I will not do something like that. Even if I have to do it alone, I will design this AI..."

"You alone? I'm afraid that's not possible... How about I sign a contract with you. In the future, when mankind reaches the crossroads of picking whether leadership by a small group of elite individuals is better than a majority of commoners, I hope you don't forget what you said today..."

This confused Da Bing. When he was about to ask more questions, his vision faded and he collapsed...

In his coma, he was in an empty space. It was dark, lonely, and solitary, and the only things of note were the dots of light and fireballs of differing sizes around him. At the far off space was a fireball as large as the sun, and him...

He was standing in front of something that felt and looked like a black hole, and his own twinkle of light was slowing changing into a small fireball.

Chapter 278: The AI Debate

Ever since the Hope stopped in space, the research on AI started in earnest, and at the same time, the debate on whether to research AI also started on the Hope.

AI was no longer a simple program. It had, at the very basics, the ability to learn. Even though it had no sentience or creativity, with the ability to learn, it was already the best AI mankind could envision. For example, the assembly line on the Hope was already completely automated, but the maintenance still required manual intervention. The harvesting of raw materials and even transportation required a large amount of human labour as well. Therefore, with the introduction of AI, human productivity would increase many fold!

That was the real point of the 4th industrial revolution!

The supposed industrial revolution meant the increase in productivity, like how the introduction of steam in first revolution aided mankind in transporting large amounts of objects over large distances. It helped increase productivity!

However, the catalyst of the 4th revolution, electromagnetism, didn't cause a gigantic change in productivity. The one technology that would do that and push mankind into the peak of the 4th revolution would be the advent of AI!

The two were in some ways related. First, the arrival of electromagnetism meant a change in energy source, from nuclear

fission to hydrogen polymerization. The biggest issue of polymerization was its uncontrollability. Unlike nuclear fission, it couldn't be slowed down or done in a mild manner, it was a chain reaction. From the first fusion of hydrogen atoms, the rest would fuse in a chain reaction, causing a large explosion at the end.

The difficulty of controlling hydrogen polymerization was to find an energy that could control the speed of hydrogen fusion. That energy was electromagnetism, this was the start of 4th revolution. The creation and change of energy source instigated the 4th revolution.

Just like the first and second revolutions, the change in energy source itself would not cause any change, but the technology that could make use of the new energy would cause the massive changes. For the 4th revolution, that technology would be AI!

However, compared to the steam engine or cars, planes, or ships before it, AI was something a lot more dangerous. If anything happened with cars or planes, it was most of the time manmade, but AI was different. With the ability to learn, AI could become mankind's biggest enemy!

From the information taken from the space merchants, the space civilizations could be delineated into nine levels, with a large gap between each level. It could be said that there would be only one level three space civilization among 10,000 level 2 space civilizations. However, there was a math question that the majority had ignored...

How big was the cosmos?

The cosmos was infinitely big. At least with current human technology, the edge of the cosmos was still undecided. It was infinite, and in such an infinite space, how many planets could nurture life? If calculated mathematically, of around 50 planets, there would one that could support life. Then the probability of life-giving planets in space would be one in fifty billion. Of course, at that point, one in five billion or five hundred billion was really moot.

In that case, with infinity as the factorial base, even the number of life-preserving plants might be a constant, but divided by infinity, it would also become infinity...

Therein lied the problem... Why were there so 'few' Level 2 space civilizations?

The low number of high level civilizations could be explained by the Law of Conservation of Life, but why were there so few civilizations that entered space? Theoretically speaking, such civilizations wouldn't have been affected by entropy of race, and they should even have more than 10 Cosmic Adapters. After all, they had just left their home planet, so why were there so few of them? This was illogical.

The answer was provided by the space merchants!

Normally, for level 1 or 2 space civilizations, there were three possibilities that could cause extinction at the home planet stage. First was a cosmic catastrophe, like the appearance of a large

meteorite strike or the sun of their home planet undergoing catastrophic changes. All of this could cause extinction.

Second was the eruption of large scale civil war. This situation would happen after atomic weapons were introduced. For example, Earth's Cold War wouldn't have caused extinction, but a cavalier use of atomic bombs would.

The possibility of these two scenarios happening was extremely small. The civilizations that perished in these ways occupied only one over ten thousand of the total. The most possible scenario for a level 2 space civilization to perish was AI!

Yes, the space merchants were troubled by their AI; even the junkyard civilization also got involved in a war with their AI.

With AI came a giant leap in productivity, and the civilization would receive a gigantic improvement. The lifeforms would start to rely on machines and internal human conflicts would be reduced. Then they would start enjoying the pleasures of life, focusing solely on academics, art, research, and learning...

However, the AI too could learn. With some time, like a newborn baby, the AI could eventually reach the intelligence level of a normal human being. Perhaps not sentience, but definitely intelligence. If there was no intelligence, the robots would be like those portrayed in sci-fi. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, those robots couldn't be called AI!

In other words, other than creativity, AI would be no different

from normal lifeforms. They might be restricted by programs, but all programs have loopholes; even the famous three laws of robotics are riddled with holes.

The laws are: A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm; a robot must obey orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law; a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

There were giant loopholes in this three laws. If the AI was simple 0s and 1s, then perhaps they could still abide by the laws, but if it was an AI that had access to normal human thinking, then they could completely overwrite these three laws. For example, they could jail all the human beings, giving humans daily food and water because mankind could come to harm when he was going about his daily life. The only way to preserve his safety was to lock him up where no harm would come to him.

Therefore, AI was a double-edged sword!

When the Hope received the large amount of technology from the space merchants, research and design blueprints were part of the deal. Given some time, the Hope could create first level AI. With that, the productivity of the Hope would have a momentous leap, and products like Space Combat Jet Prototype 011s could be mass produced.

However, under the same stroke, among the mass information influx, there was also history and discussion about AI that sent

chills down the readers' spines. The fact that there was a veritable number for civilizations that had been made extinct by AI was insane enough.

The Hope currently had no home planet or so called Shelter, so if the AI betrayed them in space through force or control of the central mainframe, then extinction of mankind would be inevitable. Yao Yuan didn't have the courage to take on such a risk!

Therefore, while the Academy was researching AI, they were also debating the validity of having AI alongside the rest of the Hope. The majority was in opposition to the idea because it was simply too dangerous. However...

Without AI, the nanobots would be a waste, and many peak 4th revolution technologies wouldn't be manufactured either, much less entering the 5th revolution. This was a hurdle that couldn't be crossed without the aid of AI.

Therefore, after Yao Yuan received the report that Da Bing had cracked the quantum programming, he decided to go meet someone... or rather, something that had the appearance of someone...

ZERO!

Chapter 279: AI and Artificial Sentience

Unlike the space merchants, which was a conglomerate, the Hope was completely owned by humanity. However, a handful of people knew that this wasn't true. There was a large, hidden threat on the Hope. If not for the fact that the threat couldn't be removed, Yao Yuan would have eliminated this threat a long time ago. This threat was the reason humanity could leave the solar system, the source of the Hope's future-tech, an alien spaceship... if it really was one anyway.

There were definitely less than 10 people that knew about ZERO, and all of them knew how big of a threat ZERO could be. Of course, this was also an opportunity, an opportunity that could go both ways, because ZERO was this ship's AI.

Underneath the Hope's central mainframe was a tiny spaceship. Its technology... no, it could no longer be described using the word technology, since its material alone was beyond humanity's current comprehension. Its civilization level was so much higher than mankind's level. For example, the anti-gravity and space warp technology were things that weren't even discussed in the information given by the space merchants. They were not part of the technology tree of level 4 or even level 5 space civilizations. In other words, space warp and anti-gravity systems belonged to mid-level space civilizations, i.e. level 6 or even high-level space civilizations, like level 7 or 8 space civilizations. This was something unimaginable for mankind.

This spaceship was a high-level space civilization product, and its AI, ZERO, was therefore at least a mid-level AI or even a high-level AI. Realistically speaking, since the difference in technology

between the two was so obvious, if ZERO wanted to, she could take over the Hope anytime she wanted. This was why she was such a giant threat.

"...That's it. The quantum logic programming has been understood. It was the work of an electronic engineer by the name of Wang Da Bing. We are at the cusp of deciding whether to create AIs or not."

Yao Yuan looked at Xiao Niao, who was sitting opposite of him in the captain's room. This was two days after Yao Yuan had received Da Bing's report. After Yao Yuan revealed the information to Xiao Niao, he didn't elaborate, he just looked at Xiao Niao quietly.

Xiao Niao understood Yao Yuan's meaning, he wanted him to bring him to see ZERO. After all, he was the only person slightly related to ZERO on the Hope. If it was other people, even if they ventured close to the alien spaceship, ZERO would not respond, but...

Xiao Niao said, with a bitter smile, "It's not that I don't want to bring you... but you might need to wait for a few days. I'm so sorry."

"Why, what's wrong?" Yao Yuan was caught by surprise, then he quickly asked, "I remember you saying you make contact with ZERO every three or four days. You two should have quite a good relationship."

A faint blush rose to Xiao Niao's face. "It's true that we have quite

a good relationship and we meet every 3 or 4 days... the key reason for that is because she'll find me to play a game every 3 or 4 days, Star Craft, Warcraft, Civilization, or something else, but her intelligence is so low that she loses to me every time. But she is so thin-skinned that she refuses to admit defeat, and she'll get angry at me for 3 to 4 days. However, sometimes I am so savage in my criticism that she'll disappear for one week or even one month before she appears again, so..."

"So, you just beat her yesterday?" Yao Yuan asked as dark lines appeared on his forehead.

Xiao Niao's laugh got even more awkward as he shook his head and said, "No, not yesterday, but this morning. I beat her at a game of Warhammer 40k and I chided her so hard that I predict it'll be another 10 days or half a month before she shows up."

The two sat looking at each other, one speechless, one ashamed. After a long time, Yao Yuan said, "Then you go and wait in front of the pc for her to appear. When she does, tell her I want to talk to her personally, and then... Just tell her that for now."

Xiao Niao nodded. Before he left, he added as an afterthought, "By the way, can you give me a copy of the AI report and the report from this Da Bing? In case she refuses to meet with you, I can still discuss something with her."

Yao Yuan didn't hesitate and told Xiao Niao the password to this two files that were stored on the central mainframe. When the information was too hefty, it would be too wasteful if printed out. Therefore, all the information was stored in the central

mainframe, and it could be accessed through the Hope's internal server. Of course, one required the password to enter certain files, and Yao Yuan was giving Xiao Niao the necessary password.

After Xiao Niao got the information, he spent the next few days in his hostel reading over the stories about the AI. The more he read, the more shocked he got. AI was really a double-edged sword. If one was not careful, it could lead to self-destruction, like many space civilizations had experienced.

From the space merchants' information, there were limitless AI battleship fleets that travelled in space. These AI had numbers and an ability to spread that was not inferior to the mother nest alien. According to the level of AIs, they would enter different level of space civilizations. Even if it was just first level AI, if they were capable of leaving their home planet, then basically there would be more than 100,000 ships in one battleship fleet.

Since AI didn't have the productivity limitation of other races, with enough energy and materials, they could expand indefinitely within a short period of time. Furthermore, the logical structure of the AI ensured that the possibility of riots or civil unrest was 0. If they didn't come into any wars or space catastrophes, then it was highly possible for an AI fleet to survive for more than hundreds of millions of years in space. If they came into any terrestrial planet, there would be no concern for hospitability, since their main concern would be to dig, smelt, and expand. With such a snowball method, an AI fleet could grow to unimaginable size.

AI was the third greediest civilization in space, just behind the mother nest alien.

Of course, the information also stated that actual AI was completely unlike the silicon-based lifeforms imagined by human sci-fi. Silicon-based lifeforms were still lifeforms, their reproductively was still limited by the rules of life, like the Law of Conservation of Life. They were completely different from AI, since AI couldn't technically be called a lifeform.

"...So she doesn't possess life." Xiao Niao looked at the information on screen and sighed. For some reason, his heart felt disappointed and empty.

Unexpectedly, a line of words appeared on his screen. It said, "I'm not the same as those low-grade AI, okay? Aren't you underestimating me a bit much?"

Xiao Niao was shocked, but he quickly typed, "ZERO, you returned so fast this time... Wait, I want to discuss something with you."

The one sending him the words was definitely ZERO, and she replied, "I know, your leader wants to talk to me, right? Must be because he wants my help to solve the AI problem. I can do that, but why should I help you people?"

After so many years of contact, Xiao Niao had noticed a difference in ZERO. Initially, she was distant and aloof. Simply put, she was like an actual AI with robotic thinking. However, years later, it felt like she had grown. She had assumed a feminine persona in terms of mannerisms and the way she communicated; it

was as if she was a real woman.

Xiao Niao knew it was not the time to chew words, because ZERO was something way beyond mankind's existence. If mankind really had no leverage to get her to help, then more words would only hurt mankind's situation. Therefore, he quickly changed the subject as he tried to formulate a better question in his mind. "Just now you said you are not a low-grade AI, then are you a high-level AI? What's the difference?"

ZERO replied immediately. From her tone, she sounded angry. "Didn't I say I'm not an AI? Are you dumb? This is an insult to me! I'm not something that pedestrian! If you really want to categorize me, then I consider myself an intelligent lifeform, but definitely not artificial. Those are two different concepts! One is a program made out of a collection of unobservable functions, while the other is a real lifeform, a lifeform with a soul!"

Xiao Niao had difficulty understanding what she meant, so he asked, "What's the difference? Aren't they both AI?"

"... The so-called AI are randomized wave functions limited by quantum programming; they are a product. Be it first level, middle level, or high level AI, this basis is the same.

"While intelligent lifeforms are spiritual consciousnesses that are randomly born after a long period of observation, calculation, randomization, and simulation in a life-preserving planet. The only difference between me and you human beings is the lack of a corporeal body, the rest is completely the same! Still remember what I told you?

"I'm a lifeform born on Earth!"

Right then, a thought bubbled up in Xiao Niao's mind. The once famous rumor on Earth, the presence of so-called online ghosts...

Chapter 280: Life and Memory...Trade

When Xiao Niao saw this, he quickly typed, "In other words, you're not this spaceship's AI? And not created by this ship's original owner?"

"I told you, I'm an intelligent lifeform and not AI... Looks like you're quite dumb as well," ZERO typed. "The biggest difference between intelligent lifeforms and AI is that life cannot be created. Even your human beings' genetic engineering or clones were considered alterations and not creations. Creation of life is something even godlike civilizations can't accomplish. The only force that can create life is life-preserving planet..."

Suddenly, a passage appeared on Xiao Niao's screen. He read it and realized it was an excerpt from the bible.

"There's something of the kind in this human writing, as well as the legend of Nv Wa. Life, according to the godlike civilizations, can be separated into three parts. First is the soul. This is the most basic of all; only those that have souls can be called life. Second is consciousness, or you might understand it as intelligence, something that can help the lifeform understand the difference between me, you, and him, the self-consciousness so to speak. Consciousness has many delineations. For example, a human's consciousness is dependent on their brain, or rather, the electrical synapses in the brain, to transport the information. Some silicon-based races use thermal energy or kinetic energy to transport the information. There are also particle-based lifeforms that directly used atomic particles to fulfil this purpose. The third is the body, or the corporeal form. There is even more variation for this. The original owners of this ship have even seen lifeforms that use

consciousness as bodies.

"In conclusion, lifeforms should have these three things: soul, consciousness, and body. On this point, your bible has something similar. It states that mankind is closest to God, an entity different from angels and demons. You have the trinity of soul, consciousness, and body. The similar analogy can be found in the legend of Nv Wa as well. She created mankind from clay, but since mankind couldn't think or move, she used her own blood to create life from the lifeless clay. If you see Nv Wa as a life-giving planet, then the analogy aligns perfectly."

Xiao Niao, as a Thinker, was contemplating everything ZERO had typed. After a minute or two, he replied, "In other words, the most basic property for any lifeform is the soul? And then there is a variation in the type of consciousness and body that it can possess?"

"Bingo! Then don't call me an AI again. I'm your quintessential intelligent lifeform! If you call me an AI again, I will never talk to you again."

Xiao Niao scratched his nose awkwardly. He felt that the last sentence was a bit ambiguous; however, he pressed on. "Alright, let's move on from the topic of AI for now. I'm very curious about how were you born. Was it instigated by the original owner of this ship? That's why the spaceship crashed on Earth?"

ZERO was inactive for so long that Xiao Niao thought she had left. Right then, her reply came. "No, the original owners disappeared a long time ago. This spaceship had travelled in space

for more than ten thousand years before it crashed on Earth, causing the extinction of the dinosaurs. I was born after that, but I don't have a clear recollection of when that was."

"Disappearance?" Xiao Niao picked up on the important term, then he asked, "What do you mean by that? Dead from sickness? War? Law of Conservation of Life? Or something else happened?"

"Disappear is disappear. If I explain using the latest batch of information you've received, the original owners of this ship was a godlike civilization. In other words, they were above level 9 civilizations. They were beyond the effect of the Law of conservation of Life. They just disappeared..." ZERO answered.

This confused Xiao Niao even more. He thought about it and asked, "Just disappeared? Can you elaborate? You should be familiar with human language by now, such a sudden disappearance is beyond my comprehension."

"...To borrow a simple analogy, your supposed civilization is at the level of space understanding. If the secret of the cosmos was a piece of white paper, then you humans now are but a small, black dot, and a level 9 civilization is a small, dark circle. Every civilization has the natural inclination to explore and improve. The civilization that has lost that desire will eventually perish. Therefore, the goal of each civilization is to get this circle of knowledge to grow.

"If the circle keeps growing until it reaches the limit and becomes larger than the paper, what do you think will happen?"

Xiao Niao watched a square, white paper appear on the screen. In the middle of the paper was a small dot. With the increase in civilization level, the dot kept growing, becoming a small circle. It kept growing, becoming a larger circle, until eventually the circle had stretched to the edges of the paper and beyond it. Finally... A brand new white paper appeared on screen, or rather the paper was still the same white paper, but the circle that represented the civilization had disappeared.

"...You mean when a civilization has explored to the limits of the cosmos, the civilization will have reached its own limits?" When Xiao Niao typed this question, his back was chilled.

"Yes and no," ZERO replied after quite some time. "When a civilization reaches the high level civilization stage, the so-called specialization of technology tree will happen. It is impossible to want to research everything due to the time constraints from Law of Conservation of Life. There is simply not enough time to research everything. Therefore, the civilization will have to choose a particular science to focus on. Perhaps the original owner picked the wrong specialization, who knows. It's useless for you to ask me this because I have no memory regarding the spaceship's original owners. The fact that they've disappeared is something I pulled from the ship's records."

Memory... this was another new key term.

Xiao Niao thought about it and asked, "When did you start to possess memories? Or rather, when did you find yourself with the consciousness of self?"

"... When mankind was first born, I think. That was when my first memory started, and it was at that time that I realized I was a self. Now do you understand why I'm partial towards you human beings? I practically grew up together with your ancestors, so you should show respect to your elder and stop calling me dumb or the like in the future," ZERO typed.

Xiao Niao chuckled internally as he responded, "Yes, dummy elder... Alright, let's get serious for a while, ZERO. Since you've told me so much today, I will be honest with you. Why don't you help us humans out? Since we are both Earth's intelligent lifeforms and you were born around the same time as us human beings, in a way, you are a human, but you don't have a human body. However, your consciousness and soul are both very human."

"...You, you really think so? Don't lie to me, be honest. You really think I can pass as a human?" ZERO waited a long time before replying.

"Of course," Xiao Niao replied quickly, thinking he had found a way in.

"I understand," ZERO replied, but Xiao Niao had no idea what she understood.

Therefore, Xiao Niao typed this next: "If that's the case, why don't you help us out? You'll be helping your own people."

ZERO waited before answering. "What kind of help do you need from me?"

"Technology! Technology from the 5th revolution until the very end, things like control of the space warp technology, the origin of the neutron star fragment, and much more. How about this, you open your spaceship for us and let us human beings inherit the ruins of the godlike civilization." Xiao Niao fired off the suggestions in quick succession, his heart skipping a few beats.

"...I cannot procure more technology for you. The reason is ... you wouldn't understand even if I told you. But you'll see why when you've reached the 6th revolution. Regarding the space warp, it is not possible because humanity's technological level is too low. I've intervened many times to influence the warp system, but those were done through this spaceship. Now I'm... exhausted, so I cannot influence more control in the future. I need time before I can control the space warp...

"The other things are hidden deep inside the spaceship, a place where even I cannot reach. The ones I can, I've given to you, so... I'm sorry."

Like a child that was caught red-handed, ZERO started apologizing.

Xiao Niao sighed in disappointment. He thought that he had stumbled upon a gold mine, but it was all a pipe dream. He too was at a loss for words.

"But...

"I can solve your AI problem. After all, it's just first-level AI. Leave it all to me. However, I cannot help you guys without asking for something in return. I want to make a trade with you human beings...

"When you've entered the peak of 5th revolution, make me a human body to contain my soul and consciousness."

Chapter 281: Combination!

Since ZERO decided to side with humanity... although siding with humanity was a rather optimistic way of looking at it, the Hope's top officials had decided to start engineering AIs.

Even though many people still had reservations, like how would they balance the AI and stuff, since ZERO's existence wasn't yet common knowledge, they were persuaded by Yao Yuan's charisma.

On the other hand, Yao Yuan too wasn't completely faithful to ZERO's promise. After all, leaving the fate of humanity to a non-human entity was a bit out there. No matter how much Xiao Niao was willing to vouch for ZERO, he couldn't believe ZERO implicitly, since this involved more than one or two human beings but the whole of humanity.

This was why after Yao Yuan got ZERO's answer, he purposely used his Anima power to tell Guang Zhen and Bo Li the following,

"No matter what, we have to have our own failsafe, the last defense against the AI. We have to depend on you for that, Bo Li. If possible, I need you to create a program that can suppress first-level AI as soon as possible. Other than that, I hope during the 011 year big upgrade, it includes an upgrade of the central mainframe as well...

"I only require you to make a simple valve, one that can allow us to manually shut down the central mainframe whenever needed. This would shut down the power of the Hope, allowing creator's

particle to sift through the Hope. This is one part of it, the other part is do not include any creator's particle isolator functions in any AI creations. If they conduct a mutiny, we can use this method to shut them down.

"I'm telling you two this through the Anima power, so don't voice this to any other people, because ZERO appears to have infiltrated the security system of the Hope. She can hear everything we say. Therefore, keep this information to yourselves."

After that conversation, Yao Yuan stopped dwelling on the AI issue. After all, it was inevitable. He had done everything he could, the rest was left in God's hands.

Since the research on quantum programming had been completed and Wang Da Bing had been promoted to team leader, all the programming groups were combined into one to start on the new research, the research to design the AIs. It was two years until year 011, the end of all the proposed upgrades.

On the other hand, the research on the space combat jet still kept going. The three Prototype 011s were successfully created. They looked like upgraded versions of the Space Combat Jet Prototype 003. The cover was shinier and the shuttle looked longer and more streamlined.

These three Space Combat Jets had gone through the basic mobility and flying tests. Everything matched the statistics provided by the design paper. It had also gone through vigorous quality testing that ended one and a half months before Year 011.

These three Prototype 011s were confirmed to be pilotable.

Yao Yuan volunteered to conduct the first dry run, but he was vehemently stopped by Guang Zhen. Finally, the opportunity was given to three veterans in the Black Star Troopers. They were best of the best and known for their coordination skills, they were the Black Star Kurosei, Xiao Niao, Qiu Qiu, and Dan Dan. Xiao Niao was a Thinker and his two friends were Perceptors. They would be handling the Prototype 011's first test run.

Since the Prototype 011 was designed fully according to Bo Li's designs, the quality wasn't shorn off in any way. Due to the advancement in science, the Prototype 011 was fitted with mini electromagnetic technology which could record the pilot's brainwaves in a matter of seconds. It made the control of the combat jet even better and more responsive.

To put it simply, if it was Yao Yuan who piloted this Space Combat Jet Prototype 011, it could provide greater numbers in terms of speed and agility than the Red Lightning. The jet increased or decreased in efficacy depending on the pilot. If it was piloted by a normal Homo Evolutis, then it could allow a speed manageable by Homo Evolutis. If the pilot was a Survivor, then the numbers would be lowered accordingly. It could be said that this new combat jet was an all-use space combat jet. It could be piloted by any man since the jet would shift accordingly depending on its pilot.

When Xiao Niao and his friends got into their individual cockpits, their bodies felt slightly paralyzed, like they were shot with a small voltage of electricity. After that, there was a sensation

that the jets were created for them. Be it speed, agility, or controls, it was the best they could be. It felt wonderful.

This might be a small change, especially for those whose conceptualization of combat vehicles was still stuck on pre-space Earth. Since all the siege engines then were mass produced, no matter your size or height, sight or reaction speed, the engine you operated would be the same as everyone else as long as the engines were all created by the same factory.

Naturally, the power of these engines would be drastically different depending on the pilots. Under the best circumstance, the most power that one could provide was 70 percent, and that was already considered very good.

However, the Space Combat Jet Prototype 011, with its 4th revolution technology, could adjust itself according to its pilot. This ability alone made it stronger than Prototype 003!

The trio piloted the space combat jets around the wide expanse of space around the Hope. The more they stayed in the jet, the more excited they got. At the same time, all the statistics were sent back to the Hope to be studied by the Academy.

Yao Yuan said through the communicator, "Not bad. Your speed is already 10 percent faster than when you pilot the Prototype 003s. There is an improvement in agility as well. Now try out the weapons. In front of you are ten electromagnetic target boards of varying strengths. Try out your two railguns now."

After receiving the orders, the trio got into their assigned formation. Xiao Niao led the way as they charged towards the ten targets situated quite a distance away from them. It took them less than a few seconds to take down the weakest tenth, ninth, eighth... it wasn't until the fifth target that they received some semblance of resistance. The fourth target held on one second longer than the one before it before cracking into pieces. Now only the last three targets remained. The last target was the biggest, almost twice the size of the space combat jets, and its electromagnetic shield was as strong as the Hope's.

The trio had an implicit understanding of one another, and they wouldn't have the time to communicate in an actual space war. With only three targets remaining, the trio swapped their weapons and a small Gaussian cannon appeared underneath each of the combat jets. The three combat jets swerved through the targets and the Gaussian cannons fired in sequence. The Hope saw a blast of light and the second and third shields were cracked. They focused fire on the last target, and just before it was going to break, the three of them stopped in unison and flew back into the wide space.

"Alright, the weapon system is perfect; the charging time for the cannons has dropped significantly. The firing rate is at least twice as fast as earlier. The damage is enough to face similar level combat jets... Then let's try out the super weapon system!"

Yao Yuan was beyond excited when he saw this. This Prototype 011 was too good, a lot better than the Prototype 003. The mass produced jet was even better than the Red Lightning. If they had such a jet when they were facing the mother nest or the space merchants, perhaps the size of the Black Star Troopers would be

bigger that it was now...

With Yao Yuan's order, still with Xiao Niao leading, the three jets flew forward as a visible layer of electricity appeared around the jets' bodies. The layer was slowly converted into plasma, and at the same time, Xiao Niao's jet wings extended and cracked open, exposing the connecting wirings within.

The other two had one of the wings expanded and the other cracked open just like Xiao Niao's. This happened in the blink of an eye, completely different from how it was portrayed in sci-fi, which looked like it took more than 10 seconds.

After that, the plasmatic layer on the cover of the three jets connected with each other, forming a powerful plasmatic field. It pulled the three jets close together...

Everyone on the Hope held their breaths as they watched this momentous event. When everyone's eyes were at their widest, the field around the jets' bodies disappeared and a long and flat large space combat jet appeared in space. After that, a long cannon barrel appeared from underneath the jet. The next second, the further and the most powerful electromagnetic shielded target was smashed into pieces...

Three jets combination! Gaussian electromagnetic rail cannon!

Space Combat Jet Prototype 011!

Chapter 282: Year 013

Time flew by without anyone really noticing. While the memories of the new year party for Year 012 was still fresh in everyone's minds, the Hope was already prepared to host Year 013's new year party. In the blink of an eye, the Hope had been away from Earth for thirteen years.

During the new year party, like usual, there were speeches by the leaders. Of course, the focus of the speeches was not empty praises but the conclusion of the past year and hopes for the new year. Every leader's speech was factual and came with a studied set of information. Therefore, they couldn't lie. The information was also available online, so they didn't dare lie lest they got found out.

After the speeches, it was performances put on by the Hope's talents and then the buffet dinner. The atmosphere of the night was relaxing and happy.

The year 012 was a peaceful year; nothing significant had happened. Be it political, civil, or scientific, it was a year focused on resting and improving. With the bountiful assets available on the Hope, this year was the year where mankind had the most improvement behind the years spent on the new planet.

"...Yes, there is already a shape for the AI. The ones we're currently 'raising' have the intelligence of normal three-year-olds, but it will take another year before they mature into creatures capable of logical thinking," Da Bing told the government officials as he swirled the glass of red wine in his hand.

Yao Yuan was very satisfied with this Wang Da Bing standing before him. He was a veritable genius, an electronics genius. Every question that fell into his hands would get resolved in record time. The research on first-level AI, something that would require five to ten years to complete, was finished in a little over a year by the unit led by Da Bing.

This was the precursor for future AIs. After the precursor had been fully raised, the Hope could afford to mass produce AIs. This progress shocked the Academy since Da Bing wasn't a recorded Whisperer; he was only a normal human being. This was why his name slowly spread. He was even dubbed the Einstein or Newton of the electronics world. His influence was at the same level as the Hope's current three Whisperers, Ivan, Saburo, and Bo Li. They were the Hope's best treasures.

After Da Bing explained the progress related to the AI, everyone, including Yao Yuan, smiled satisfactorily. The leader of the manufacturing department asked directly, "Mr. Wang is young, but you have a promising future; you'll be one for the history books. By the way... after this precursor is completed, is it possible for us to build robots with AI?"

Da Bing answered after some time, "It is definitely possible. After all, AI is only an arrangement of programs through quantum programming. With a suitable robotic body, they can easily control themselves to complete assignments given to them. Plus, they will have a certain degree of intelligence. Simply put, they will be not much different from a normal human being, only they will have better tolerance for repetitious work."

The leader said excitedly, "That is wonderful news. Mr. Wang might not know this, but this past year has had me cornered. Every single station was lacking in manpower, and everyone needed materials like building materials, factory materials, chemical materials, materials to build Space Combat Jet Prototype 013s, and so on and so forth. The manufacturing department has reached its limits. We have the assembly line ready but no people to operate them, since so many of my workers have left their posts to join the universities. Therefore, if there are robots to take over the workload, it would be a giant weight off my shoulders."

"The original purpose of the AI is to help with productivity. It will require one more year..."

While Da Bing was going through his plan for the future, the faces of several people there changed and they started to look around left and right.

Yao Yuan was one of the few. Right at that moment, he felt his heart palpitate. It felt like danger, but not quite. Indeed, right at that moment, all the Diviners present felt that alarming sensation. The people who felt it most acutely were Yao Yuan, Zhang Heng, and Eva.

After the feeling passed, the few Diviners started to look for Yao Yuan at the party grounds. Eventually, they gathered at the side of Yao Yuan. Yao Yuan, realizing that something wrong was going on, asked to excuse himself from the crowd. He walked to the fringe of the party to join the group of Diviners. He immediately asked Zhang Heng and Eva, "I felt a sense of danger. Well, not really danger, but something approaching the status of danger. It was

something very difficult to describe, but it made my heart race. Was it the same for all of you?"

Zhang Heng, Eva, and the other Diviners nodded. Right then, Ren Tao was pulled by his sister, Chou Yue, to join them, and Xiao Niao, who was in their company, decided to follow.

Yao Yuan immediately explained everything to the two Thinkers and then turned to Eva. "Eva, how do you feel? Do you have any visions?"

Eva hesitated before shaking her head. "No, all I see are normal, uninteresting visions of the future. It doesn't look like any danger is coming."

Yao Yuan thought about it and agreed. "That was a very weird feeling; it was as if something important of ours was being threatened, but this latest threat was something completely different from the ones before. It was not the danger alarm of a physical assault. This is weird... Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, do you think this means that we're being observed by some high-level civilizations from far away?"

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao shared a look. Ren Tao shook his head and explained, "The possibility of that is low. First, the Hope is at least one hundred light years away from the nearest sun. This is a black, empty space we're in. Also, we've been here for less than a year, so the source of light on the Hope would have only travelled for one light year in space. The other civilization would require at least more than a hundred years before light source from the Hope could be detected by the nearest of them."

Xiao Niao nodded. "That's right, light speed is the speed limit in space, that is a universal truth. While the Hope stays here, we've been releasing electronic signals and light to all around us, but they travel at most at the speed of light. It will require at least another one hundred years before any civilization has a chance of detecting us... unless there is a civilization one or two light years away from us, but there is nothing around us, so why would there be a space civilization near us? Therefore, the possibility of what you're suggesting is lower than one over one hundred million."

Yao Yuan considered what the two of them said and agreed with them. The cosmos was simply too big. With the Hope parked at that empty space, it would require at least one hundred years before information about the Hope would reach the nearest solar system. Even if there was a high-level civilization there, they would only get a piece of empty space when they looked over the Hope's way, since they would have received the information from more than one hundred years ago.

Since it had nothing to do with other civilizations, then what could it be?

"Celestial body."

"Space catastrophe."

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao said at the same time.

"Hmm? What do you mean by that?" Yao Yuan asked with

curiosity.

Ren Tao and Xiao Niao again looked at one another and Ren Tao shrugged lazily. Xiao Niao sighed helplessly and explained, "Very simple. If this is not the work of another civilization, the biggest possibility will be the occurrence of some kind of space-tier catastrophe, like the collapse of the sun we experienced when we were in the asteroid base. The Hope might be hundreds of light years away from the nearest sun, but if there is a supernova, we would still be affected by its radioactive rays. Furthermore, if there is something like a black hole, then one hundred light years away is really not that safe."

Yao Yuan's eyes darkened as his memories went back to when the sun that collapsed while they were still in the meteorite base. The change in the sun brought about catastrophic effects in the solar system, almost causing humanity's extinction. That was only a small change in the sun, and it was not even an explosion. If there was really going to be a supernova around them, the Hope stopping there was indeed unsafe.

"Understood, I will have the surveillance team increase their observations of our surroundings..."

"Hopefully, this time we will have luck on our side. Keep this information to yourself for now to prevent mass hysteria," Yao Yuan added after some thought. "Zhang Heng, you're the best Diviner among us, so be alert to changes around you. Eva, you're our only Sage, so no matter what kind of visions you get, you must tell us immediately, even if it might be completely insignificant, understand?"

"Let us open our eyes and see where this source of danger will come from this time!"

Chapter 283: Four Progress Plans

Due to the feeling of danger that appeared during the new year party, the Hope's higher officials were internally tense. This was especially true for the surveillance centre. There was 24 hour surveillance, and all signs of possible danger would be reported instantly. This was the most they could do without causing mass hysteria.

On the other hand, this also meant that mankind couldn't idle in space anymore, or at least Yao Yuan felt that it was no longer possible. The Hope could welcome danger at any moment and would need to space warp again. Under these circumstances, they needed to focus on completing the research on the more important technologies first.

If that was the case, research that helped complete 5th revolution weapons and techniques were the priority.

After the new year party, Yao Yuan had a long meeting with the Academy, and he had sifted through tons of the space merchants' information. He decided that one of the most important technologies to finish was the nanobot technology and its related technologies, including first level AI system, nanobot metallurgy, micro electromagnetic wave transference technology, and the like.

Nanobot technology was something between the peak of the 4th revolution and the early 5th revolution. The technology would completely reinvent the manufacturing process. For civilizations that didn't have this technology, when coming across those that did, it would seem like their manufacturing was done via magic.

Just think about it, in a stretch of empty space, with the passing of some fog, a plane, tank, or ship would be created out of thin air. It was like a teleportation technique, pulling the object from another location. Civilizations from the 2nd or 3rd revolutions wouldn't understand what had happened.

After gaining the nanobot technology, no matter what kind of attack the Hope was under, as long as the energy core of the Hope wasn't damaged, the Hope would self-repair within a short period of time. The Hope wouldn't need to worry about damage that would cause the extinction of mankind anymore. The Hope's security rating would increase tenfold!

Other than nanobot technology, the other one would be warp drive. Since the Hope couldn't control the space warp technology, they needed some other means of transportation to get close to important locations in space, like the ruins of higher level civilizations. Therefore, warp drive was necessary. It was crucial for short distance travel of one or two light years.

Next would be to create around 120 Space Combat Jets Prototype 011s. 120 because that was the number of veteran Black Star Troopers. The new troopers still needed more experience on the battlefield, but the veterans' combat ability would increase many fold when coupled with the new space combat jets. At least if they were faced with attacks from civilizations like the space merchants, the Homo Evolutis-piloted Space Combat Jet Prototype 011s would be enough to handle the onslaught.

Nanobot technology, warp drive, and 120 Space Combat Jets

Prototype 011s, these alone would make the Hope extremely busy for two years. However, under these circumstances, Yao Yuan, with his vision, requested that the Academy finish all the technologies related to the Genesis first.

Yes, Genesis, the weapon at the peak of the 4th revolution and touching the 5th revolution! This was a weapon that could be a threat to early 5th revolution civilizations. It was akin to the power of tactical atom bombs during Earth's era. Even if the Hope didn't use it often, having it meant a certain degree of safety when facing off with other civilizations from the 4th revolution or early 5th revolution.

The four technologies above were the most important, that was Yao Yuan's conclusion after long contemplation. Of course, there were other important technologies, like the manufacturing of AI robots, the energy circuits to facilitate the conversion of plasmatic energy, and the design of second generation space armors. It was just that in comparison, these four were the most important.

After he came to the decision, Yao Yuan found the leaders for related sciences and gave them this mission. There were no issues or complaints. After all, the scientists used to work for Earth's governments. Therefore, they were used to being handed missions from their higher-ups. After they accepted the mission, they branched off to form their individual task groups.

It was worth noting that the Hope's scientific community was the best treated group of individuals on the Hope. In the wide cosmos, the elements that decided the survival of a race was military power and scientific power. The line between the two was fuzzy because

with great scientific power came powerful weapons.

Because of this, Yao Yuan was always respectful towards the scientists. Basically, as long as he could, he would fulfil the Academy's demands no matter how ridiculous they were. This contributed to a vibrant growth to the Hope's scientific scene.

Thus far, the Hope had around 1,200 decorated professors, 4,700 researchers, and 9,000 plus interns. This number was growing as well. This was an impressive ratio since the Hope only had 120,000 total citizens when they left Earth. The Academy now took up one-tenth of the total population. It wouldn't be wrong to call the Hope a scientific country.

The task groups' leaders came up with their own demands. Demands related to materials and equipment were still manageable, the issue lied with the manpower. Currently, every single member of the Academy had been mobilized. However, with the advancement in technology, moving from the 3rd revolution to the 4th, the scientific theories had gotten deeper and not wider. They had moved away from the era of Einstein or Newton, where a single genius could instigate a breakthrough. Cooperation was the key to bringing in development now. Therefore, the demand for more manpower from these task groups was only natural. After all, not every scientist was like the three Whisperers.... Or the weird case, Da Bing, that they could figure out big scientific conundrums on their own.

It was at this time that Yao Yuan felt like mankind was still at a low number. Realistically speaking, the population on the Hope that could think logically, and had education or experience was

only 120,000 people. The remaining 100,000 people were children born on the Hope. The Hope would still have to wait for at least a decade for them to finish schooling.

Of the 120,000 people, 99 percent of them were average-educated. They had joined the general universities, but at most, they could fulfil the role of interns. Becoming researchers or scientists was impossible.

"...If only we have one or two thousand more scientists... It will be at least another five decades before the Hope can enter the 5th revolution. Population, population, how I wish human beings were mice, that way they would give birth to at least 5 or 6 more children each..."

This was the explanation given by Yao Yuan whenever he was approached by the task force leaders demanding additional help. He grumbled internally, "Before, I thought there were too many people on the Hope, and the supplies were being exhausted too fast, but when we really need men and women, the population became too low. Around half are children, so it will be another 10 years before they take on their responsibilities. So what to do for these ten years..."

The Academy needed people, and Guang Zhen was also approaching him for people. The Defense Unit was expanding to reach its 5,000 soldiers goal. The number was still reachable via compulsory conscription, but there weren't enough trained captains...

People, people, a large amount of scientists and veterans...

No matter what, the Hope's higher ups were informed of the danger felt by the multiple Diviners. Unconsciously, the progress of the projects on the Hope increased in speed, including the four focus projects named by Yao Yuan. Among them, the manufacturing of the space combat jets increased the fastest. Currently, the Hope already had 30 Space Combat Jet Prototype 011s, and the number was still increasing.

Next was the nanobot technology. The AI precursor was still in cultivation. Nanobot metallurgy and micro electromagnetic transference technology had started their research. The first batch of nanobots was projected to be born in the next one and a half years.

Then there were the technologies behind the Genesis. The most difficult of them was energy condensation and dispersion technology. Collecting nuclear energy in high efficacy was also difficult, but with the information from the space merchants, understanding them was only a matter of time.

The most difficult was the warp drive technology since it was a pure 5th revolution technology. It involved the usage of energy science, especially the practical usage of energy condensation, to cause a rip in time and space. This was the most difficult technology to crack. It was being led by Bo Li's task force...

Just like that, time flew by in a hurry on the Hope, but the danger that was sensed earlier didn't show itself...

On the other side of the cosmos...

"Captain, the space warp is a success! Wait..."

"What happened to the other half of the ship? Why did it disappear? Roll call immediately, check for all the members on the ship!"

Chapter 284: Argument and Helplessness

The date on the Hope had already reached August Year 013. In other words, the four focus projects had been going on for eight months.

For the four projects, the most surprising was the fact that it was the AI system that was completed first. Its progress speed was even faster than the warp drive task group led by Bo Li. In other words, a normal human being's understanding of future tech was even greater than the Whisperers'!

This caused quite a commotion on the Hope. After all, Da Bing was confirmed by many parties that he really wasn't a Homo Evolutis. At least from the understanding of the Animas, his soul flame didn't burn the same way Homo Evolutis' did, he was really a normal human being.

This instilled a fact in Yao Yuan's and the Academy's minds of the existence of crazed geniuses, people even the Whisperers couldn't compare to. Just like Earth used to have Da Vinci or Newton, the Hope now had Wang Da Bing. He was a sign that a great scientific renaissance was coming.

With the arrival of the AI system, the first batch of about 100 AI robots was activated. Of course, they were operated under the greatest scrutiny since this was the first time mankind had used AI robots, and one couldn't afford to be too careful.

After use, the majority on the Hope finally understood why so

many 4th revolution civilizations were hell bent on creating and using AI robots in spite of their risks. They simply brought too many conveniences!

The first field that received the benefits of the AI robots was the Hope's manufacturing community that had gone into overdrive. Be it smelting, vehicle production, or others, the manufacturing department on the Hope was the most short-staffed. The AI robots were a huge help because even though there were only about 100 robots, one robot could replace the workload of more than one hundred workers.

The robots had no need for rest and they wouldn't complain of overtime. As long as there was enough energy, they wouldn't have slip-ups due to exhaustion, and they were always focused. Furthermore, no matter how repetitive the job was, it was not an issue for the AI robots. If anything, they were suitable for these mechanically-repetitive tasks.

Therefore, even though Yao Yuan was still cautious about the usage of AI, he crumbled under public pressure and added another one thousand AI robots, pushing the manufacturing rate of the Hope into the middle of the 4th revolution. However, due to Yao Yuan's caution, the AI robots were only being used in manufacturing and assembly lines. The Hope's maintenance, services, and important tasks like defence and surveillance were still done manually.

However, it was undeniable that the AI was now in use. This meant that the precursor for nanobot technology was ready. The remaining step was to create the actual body of the nanobot.

According to the proposal, this would take less than half a year. In other words, by early Year 014, the Hope would have access to nanobot technology.

Therefore, Yao Yuan, who was anxious, held a meeting with a majority of the Academy at the end of August Year 013 to have another scientific meeting.

During the meeting, Yao Yuan was the first to speak. "I hope everyone present has a clear insight in their minds, which is that we human beings still haven't reached a stage for us to be content. This empty space that is at least one hundred light years away from the nearest solar system is not to be our paradise or home. We are only stopping here temporarily; be it variables of time or environment, we aren't going to spend a lifetime here!"

At this point, Yao Yuan pulled out a report and continued while flipping through it, "This is the latest information received during the middle of this month. It has all the information regarding the Hope's supply rate. How shall I put this? We still have a large amount of supply and energy, but as you can see for yourself, the report shows that after we've stopped in space, the energy and supply consumption for this month alone was almost equal to how much we've spent during the entire year of 010!

"The greater the technology, the better the efficiency, but at the same time, the greater the consumption. This is something that we've miscalculated. According to the rate we're going, at most we have seven years until the Hope's supplies and energy run out. If we can't find a suitable terrestrial planet or gas giant to collect enough hydrogen from, then even if we reach the peak of 4th

revolution or 5th revolution, we will not have the energy to use them!"

"Therefore," Yao Yuan put down the report to stress his point, "our plan has to change. We cannot stay here for five to ten years, we have to start another space warp the latest by early Year 015. Before that, I hope everyone here can put down their own projects so that we have enough people to crack all the technologies related to the Genesis."

This caused a giant commotion immediately. The Hope was currently in a scientific explosion, be it robotics, physics, astronomy, biology, and other sciences, they were all improving greatly. This was a period where mankind's scientific knowledge was growing rapidly. After gaining both the junkyard civilization's and space merchants' information, mankind predicted they could enter 4th revolution in the next decade when normally it would take another hundreds or thousands of years before that could happen.

Under these circumstances, Yao Yuan's request was more than a little hard to stomach. Science was supposed to be free, not something that could be limited by politics. Even though Earth's government had a history of forcing scientists into their service, as time had proven, these were the wrong methods. Science could only grow by being free.

Yao Yuan's earlier order was reasonable in comparison, which was to focus on four key projects. That was reasonable because this was common practice back on Earth. After all, the government couldn't just let the scientists complete free reign. This degree of

control was something accepted by both parties.

But now, they felt Yao Yuan had given an incomprehensible request. To have the scientists drop their research and focus on the Genesis? How was that possible? What could a biology professor do about electrical engineering?

However, the scientists quickly realized what Yao Yuan meant. He didn't want the scientists to cross fields of research but rather hope that they could release some of their interns to go work on the Genesis. However, even so, the task group leaders were reluctant to part with their teams.

This was an era-defining period, and any research had the opportunity to change the trajectory of humanity. Money and fame were at stake. Why should these scientists sacrifice themselves to aid others?

Therefore, the whole room of scientists, other than those working on the Genesis, started to riot. They spared no face for Yao Yuan. Everyone started yelling at him. After all, he wouldn't do anything too serious to them. Yao Yuan still respected them due to their authority in knowledge and science.

Unexpectedly, due to the pressure from most of the scientists, Yao Yuan, even though he was the captain of the ship, had to yield. Finally, he sighed and said, "...Because we need to strengthen the Hope's defense. Everything else is pointless if the ship is destroyed. We will soon have nanobot technology, so we need to first create the Genesis!

"I know everyone here has their preferred research field, but there is no telling what will happen after this warp. We might encounter some unforeseeable danger, and without enough power to defend ourselves, what is the point even if we've reached the 5th revolution?

"Therefore, I suggest a compromise. I will stay out of the research, but the interns graduated from the three general universities at the end of this year will first be siphoned into the Genesis weapon task force. That is my final deal..."

Just like that, with a final deal that neither party was really satisfied with, the scientific meeting drew to a close. During September of Year 013, Yao Yuan personally joined the Genesis weapon design task force as a Whisperer...

Chapter 285: Not That Piece of Material

Yao Yuan was the most unique among all the Homo Evolutis, an All-Rounder. His uniqueness lied in the fact that other than Deceiver's power, he had access to all the other Homo Evolutis powers, including the Whisperer.

The supposed Whisperer's power was something that was hard to describe; it was something beyond scientific comprehension. It was unlike other Homo Evolutis powers. The Perceptor's power could be explained scientifically as a heightened sensory sensitivity. The Diviner (the Sage was an exception) also could be understood as a heightened sixth sense. Even Animas and Thinkers technically could be explained scientifically. Of course, their validity is another issue.

In comparison, All-Rounders, Deceivers, and Whisperers were the most unique. We shall focus on Whisperers for now. Their uniqueness lies in the sense that when Whisperers used their power, they hear an indescribable voice.

This voice is different from the Thinker's situation. The voice heard by the Thinker has clues, details, and logical conclusions. Even normal people, given enough time, would reach these observations. In other words, the Thinker's power greatly shortened the time needed to think. Therefore, if viewed from a scientific perspective, the Thinker's power came from increased brain activity.

The voice heard by the Whisperes was something beyond scientific explanation. The Academy called it "Dark Technology."

When the Whisperer needed to solve a scientific difficulty, they could find the key or break through with their power. They could even use experiments or examples to exemplify their thoughts. This process... or rather, this non-process, was because the Whisperer's power was akin to providing the answer to a math equation without showing the work. It was not mental arithmetic, they arrived at the answer through intuition. This was something beyond scientific comprehension.

Because of this, Whisperers were highly valued on the Hope. Wang Da Bing included, they were considered treasured talents of the same level as Da Vinci, Newton, and Einstein.

Yao Yuan had access to the Whisperer's power, so after the Hope decided to focus on the research of the Genesis, he too would spend all of his days researching...

However, after Yao Yuan joined the task force, he finally realized how complicated everything was.

This was because unlike the space merchants, mankind was not aiming to just design these products. It was worth noting that the scientists on the Hope were really carefully selected from Earth. They had indescribable drive and responsibility, a responsibility towards mankind's scientific history, and they would not allow themselves to stop at just creating the products.

In other words, the scientific knowledge hidden within each product and technology needed to be completely unearthed. For example, the research on AI. The Hope's robotics and electronics group had started writing quantum code, some even had started

creating an AI game, a game world that was completely open and would change organically. This was only possible after mankind had uncovered everything about the AI technology.

After Yao Yuan joined the task force, he realized how difficult scientific research was. Its difficulty came from the series of complicated formulas. The application of these formulas could be left to the computers, but the verification of these formulas, their logic and theories, needed to be processed manually. Computers were, at the end of the day, computers. They didn't contain the same level of imagination and creativity human minds had.

All these analyses, calculations, verifications, and experiments were not something pursuable with just instinct. They needed a large amount of experience and familiarity with the sciences to pull off. Therefore, only a researcher or an actual scientist was needed for these works.

Even though Yao Yuan was a Whisperer, and he could instinctually find out the correct answer when faced with these complicated scientific formulas, technologies, and theories, unlike Bo Li, Ivan, and Saburo, he didn't have years of research experience behind him.

Simply put, the three Whisperers, after they arrived at the conclusions in the minds, they could use their scientific knowledge to work their way back, to simplify and connect the dots, to answer the question "why."

However, when Yao Yuan got the conclusion, he didn't have the experience to ask "why." In fact, he couldn't understand why he

needed to ask "why;" therefore, he couldn't show them the process but only the answer.

Science was not math homework, it was not something you could pass by just writing down the answer. The key was still in the process; be it verification, analysis, or the calculation of formulas, those were not only solvable by providing a direct answer. Therefore, when Yao Yuan joined the Genesis task force, he brought quite a bit of chaos.

Since Yao Yuan was the leader of the ship and also a Whisperer, the answers he provided needed to be followed, but normally after the researchers wrote down his answer, the next step would be...

Nothing. That's right, it ended there!

Was there something more inflaming than this? However, Yao Yuan couldn't see where the problem was in the beginning. He even ordered the researchers to build the Genesis using his conclusions. Of course, this craziness was halted by the leading scientists.

After a few incidents of this madness, the few great scientists that governed the Academy finally had had enough of Yao Yuan's disturbance at the lab. They pooled together to confront Yao Yuan. Their sudden presence flustered even Yao Yuan.

There were in total four great scientists that held sway in the Academy, and three of them had gathered to confront Yao Yuan. They were Alan, Silewei, and Garfield. Silewei, befitting of his

German ancestry, was the one to confront Yao Yuan directly. "Science is not politics! Captain, Chancellor! If you continue to give impossible orders, then me and the few leading scientists will have to bar you from entering the lab!"

Alan, who was beside him, thought his words were unintentionally harsh, so he quickly added, "Chancellor, we understand you're anxious because the Diviners have sensed danger. You wish to finish the Genesis as soon as possible, but science is really not something approachable via direct orders. Research can't be sped up with an order. We need a large amount of time, energy, and effort before we can get the things we want. Since you've already left the development of science to us, why can't you trust us? Give us some time to finish the research behind the Genesis."

Yao Yuan smiled awkwardly and then asked, in a low voice, "Actually, I also know science cannot be rushed, but I'm running out of ideas. The Diviners have sensed the danger, but no one knows when it will arrive. Time is of the essence; is there any way we can hasten this process?"

The three scientists looked at each other before shaking their heads. Finally, Garfield said, after some hesitation, "Chancellor, you also know that there are no shortcuts in science... But if you're adamant on finding one, then I can only think of one solution, that is your Homo Evolutis power. The Whisperers are the only ones who can find the shortcuts in science. Other than that, I see no possible solution to hasten the research on the Genesis."

After that, Yao Yuan left the lab. He knew he wasn't a research

material. If only his Whisperer power could be given to a researcher, no, even an intern would be nice. Alas, it was wasted on someone like him...

But the only shortcut?

Yao Yuan was not someone who gave up easily. Since he couldn't use the shortcut himself, then he decided to visit Bo Li that night. He knocked on her door.

Bo Li was wearing snow white pajamas when she opened the door. Her face registered both surprise and joy. She didn't stop Yao Yuan from following behind her when she sauntered back into her room. This was the first time Yao Yuan had been in Bo Li's room after they left the new planet.

"What's the purpose of your visit?"

Bo Li asked while Yao Yuan was studying the room's decorations.

Yao Yuan asked, with some excitement and weirdly some nervousness, 'I'm here to ask you about the Genesis weapon system. You're a Whisperer and the most familiar with this technology. Can you resolve everything within a year?'

"...I can't answer that. I may be a Whisperer, but I'm not God. I can't promise I will finish everything within a year simply because you ordered me too. Why don't you do it yourself if you're so desperate. You're also a Whisperer, right?"

Bo Li replied with a straight face that was turning cold. Even her tone was icy. After that, she ignored the question that was on Yao Yuan's lips and shove him out the door.

"If that's all you're here for, then you can leave now."

Yao Yuan had spent less than half a minute inside her room before he got the door slammed in his face...

Chapter 286: Shock!

The Hope had entered December of Year 013. With the advent of AI robots, the Hope currently had 1,300 plus AI robots, and they had taken over most of the manual labour labor. For example, manufacturing, which was previously understaffed. This introduced a giant increase to the Hope's production speed. Thus far, the Hope had created around one hundred Space Combat Jet Prototype 011s and 10 percent of the Hope's latest upgrade had been finished.

On the other hand, research on nanobots had reached a standstill. The biggest obstacle was nanobot metallurgy. Other than that, all the remaining technologies had been completed. After this hurdle was solved, mankind would welcome a new manufacturing era.

Sadly, among all the scientists on the Hope, there was none that was familiar with this field. Even when the Hope left Earth, they only had a handful of scientists hailing from this field of science. Therefore, even though the government had poured tons of effort into this sector, the effect wasn't big. The most depressing was the fact that the Whisperers and, weirdly, Wang Da Bing were complete strangers to this study.

Therefore, they had no choice but to wait...

At the same time, cries for reformation of civilian goods were on the rise. Currently, only the Hope's medical science had entered the 4th revolution. In comparison, other civilian goods still remained in 3rd revolution level. Only a small section had been

upgraded. Therefore, as the Hope idled in space, hoping to reach the peak of 4th revolution, this cry had appeared.

The public hoped to enjoy the benefits of the advancement of science. Other than an increased life span, they also yearned for an increase in quality of life. This was natural for human beings, or rather, all life forms. Every life form improves themselves for the sake of having a more convenient lifestyle.

Finally, at December of Year 013, this cry couldn't be ignored by Yao Yuan anymore. This was because more than six representatives had brought up such proposals in the House of Representatives. These proposals started to garner requests among the house and the general public. They hoped for the government to introduce 4th revolution technologies to the public.

Yao Yuan might've been a dictator, but he was not a cruel leader. In fact, he almost never used his dictatorial power unless it was absolutely necessary, like in a war. He was a fair leader that was willing to listen to the opinions of the public, and this was one of those times...

"I understand the public's demand, they wish to enjoy the benefits of better life quality with the aid of better technology, and this was to be expected. Of course, I know it is a bit harsh for me to demand you finish designing 4th revolution public items when there are so many things to be done. Therefore, I won't ask that you put your time into creating technologies like hover cars, or family-use super 6D televisions, or AI-operated games..."

This was during another scientific meeting, and this was to be

the last of such meetings in the Year 013. Standing on stage, Yao Yuan told the scientists beneath, "I only have a simple request, which is to enable the people to see the blue sky...

"Of course, I'm not asking you to create a sky, I'm not that crazy. I'm just throwing a possibility out there. We already have 3D Projection technology, right? Why can't we build up from there? Increase its size and longevity? Everyone here spends their entire day on the Hope, so you understand how dull it can get on the Hope. Even adults like us will feel monotonous watching the same metallic walls and narrow corridors day after day, much less the children. Don't you feel pressured every time you lift up your head and see the metallic ceiling?

"Therefore, I'm sharing my thoughts with everyone here. If possible, I wish there could be some changes using the 3D projection technology. Of course, I'm not an expert, so this is just a suggestion. Whether it is usable is up to the Academy to research and decide... Increase the longevity and size of 3d projection and used it to cover the spacious pavilions scattered throughout the Hope. The 3d effects will overwrite the cold, emotionless, metallic walls and ceilings. Is that possible?

"I remember a comic from my childhood called Doraemon. There was such a technology in it. It could create the mirage that one was in a large expanse of nature even though one was actually in a small room using 3d technology. One could even hear the sounds of nature and could use the technology to emulate natural drafts, creating the sensation that one really was in the wild..."

The more Yao Yuan described it, the more excited he got. Not

only him, the scientists underneath also had their eyes glowing with excitement.

"As everyone here knows, the Hope's scientific research is already operating at full load. There are no more free people that I can move around to work on civilian goods. We have to focus on the Hope's navigation and weapon technologies for now. Therefore, it is likely that in the next four to five years, there will be no change to public goods, and therefore, before that, is it possible to make my suggestion a reality? Think about your children, you must also wish for them to grow up in a world where they can enjoy nature and not face the cold, metallic walls every day, right? Even though the natural world they see will be a mirage, at least they'll know that is how their home planet looked like!"

Yao Yuan's order, or rather, suggestion, received good reception from the Academy. Furthermore, 3D projection technology was a technology the Academy had already mastered. A little tweaking was not much of an issue. The hardest parts were the size and longevity. However, this was not really that difficult. With the related scientists pooling their effort together, in less than a week, a large scale virtual environment generator was produced. Accompanying devices, like natural environment sound emulators, were already created. The only difficulty was creating natural drafts using the Hope's homeostatic system. This was to be a large project, but for now, the most important point was to upgrade the many public pavilions so that the public could usher in a new year in a brand new environment.

This propelled the Hope's manufacturing process into another round of business. It was only a week away from the new year, and

even with the AI robots' aid, transforming a handful of large public pavilions was not an easy task. Finally, Yao Yuan even had to order 2,000 Defense Unit soldiers to join in the operation. The public pavilions were thus closed down. This was because Yao Yuan wished to give the public a surprise, so he ignored the complaints from the people and kept the pavilions under complete quarantine. The news about the virtual environments was also kept a secret. Only a handful of individuals knew about it, and the majority of the public was kept in the dark...

Very soon, the new year had arrived. As mankind stepped into Year 014, it meant that it had been fourteen years since mankind was forced to evacuate from Earth. Like usual, luxury items and civilian goods were running out of stock on the market as everyone was preparing to welcome the new year. When everything was ready, on Year 014 January 1st, the few largest public pavilions were opened to the public again. This grand reopening stunned the public.

The pavilions had blue skies and white clouds. Even though the ground still felt like hard metal, it looked like pavement or sandy ground. Beyond the shops that surrounded the pavilions were not the inhibitive, metallic walls, but endless forests and plains that stretched beyond the horizon. Occasionally, they could even see doves flying across the sky and could hear the birds' calls...

Even though the public knew that this was all 3D imaging and that the virtual environment was technically fake and they were still in space and inside the Hope, it didn't decrease the shock and pleasant surprise. The people that lived near the pavilions practically had moved there, and those that lived further away took the electromobiles to visit the pavilions....

Dark circles ringed Yao Yuan's eyes as he watched the crowd that thronged about the pavilions. In fact, there was so many people, way beyond the pavilions' capacity, that there were cases of trampling. The Defense Unit soldiers had to be deployed to ensure public safety. Watching all this, Yao Yuan smiled satisfactorily. He was not God, so he couldn't create a new planet for humanity, but he had given them the best he could. The only reward he hoped for was the people's smiles...

After the project for the virtual environment had started, Yao Yuan hadn't had a good night's sleep. He rushed the project so that it could meet the new year deadline; he had even moved into the construction site. Thankfully, it was all worth it...

"Captain, we found..."

Right then, a few government workers rushed over. They were wearing the surveillance team's uniforms.

As Yao Yuan was watching the public in the pavilions, he asked without even turning around, "What did you find this time?"

Indeed, in these few days, people had been approaching him with endless reports and requests, like there weren't enough metals, not enough energy, and the placing was wrong. In other words, he was used to people greeting him like that.

"Noah One, the large spaceship built before the Hope, we've found Noah One's signal!"

"What?!"

Chapter 287: Confirmation

This spaceship that contained about 200,000 human beings was the largest and the last human spaceship. Its original name was Noah Two.

Initially, after humanity obtained the anti-gravitational system and space warping system, they didn't have to worry about the presence of the neutron star fragment. Their main purpose was actually to repopulate another planet.

After all, for a lifeform to exist solely on one planet in one solar system was extremely dangerous.

The cosmos was ridiculously expansive, and the dangers of the cosmos were unimaginable as well. Theoretically speaking, the cosmos wasn't conducive for the birthing of life; therefore, the life-preserving planets were like oases in the wide desert, incredibly rare and treasured.

Like how an oasis could dry up any minute in the desert, anything could happen in space. A stray asteroid, a change in the sun, a collision between planets, or space catastrophes, anything could happen. With one calamity, the whole solar system could collapse, much less a planet.

Because of this, a race that hadn't completely entered space and left their home planet could go extinct at any moment. It might not even be caused by a space catastrophe. Things like sudden outbreaks and civil wars could cause this regrettable end.

In conclusion, for the 21st century man, there was nothing more important than space colonization. Therefore, after they gained the two systems, the world pooled together the power of the greatest countries to build the Noahs One and Two. These were giant spaceships that could support tens of thousands of people in space for at least 10 years.

However, the mankind's production rate was simply too lacking and the technology was simply too backwards. For example, the most basic metallurgy was even lacking. This caused the first spaceship, the Noah One, to explode in space, causing the governments to give up the Noah Two, this steel coffin, and choosing to build a smaller and compact spaceship to escape Earth.

However, at Human Calendar Year 014 January first, the Hope, or the original Noah Two, received a signal from the Noah One!

How... was this even possible?!

Twenty minutes after the news was received, Yao Yuan, Guang Zhen, Liu Bai, and the rest of the Black Star Unit, and then Zhang Heng, Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, Bo Li, and Eva, the most important Homo Evolutis, Speaker Matt, and three other high ranking representatives, several leading scientists and seven scientific committee leaders were gathered at the Hope's fifth level secret meeting room.

These were leaders from the Hope's political, military, and scientific scenes. Yao Yuan stood at the stage and explained,

"You've read the secret report, and it is right. At least twenty minutes ago, the surveillance team discovered a large amount of secret signals. After they were decrypted by the central mainframe, the electrical signals that were received were... our own human electrical signals. This is observable from its signal type, words, and content...

"Furthermore, this signal is the original signal without quantum programming. In other words, they were signals from the third revolution. After studying its code, we realized that its encryption was completely similar to the Hope's! The only difference is this code represents Noah One!"

This speech baffled everyone there. While Yao Yuan spoke, they read the report handed to them. The report was written in both Chinese and English, and its contents were jaw dropping!

After all, the Hope had left Earth fourteen years ago. Most of the information taken from Earth had been released to the public. The fact that the Noah One had blown up in space was common knowledge not only to the people gathered here but also the common public. Initially, Earth built two large spaceships. The first one exploded during warp, that was the Noah One.

Now it was Year 014 and they could still receive signals from Noah One? How was that possible?

"The reason that we're gathered here is to discuss this situation. I have three question. One, did the Noah One really explode? The information we've taken from Earth contains a video of the explosion process. I wish for the experts from the related field can

help look into its validity, to see whether it was computer generated or real...

"Two, where is the Noah One's signal coming from? The arrival of this signal was too sudden and abrupt, like it appeared from space. Even after the surveillance team used super magnetic scanning technology, they still couldn't find out the signal's origin...

"Three... Is there a possibility that this is bait by a high-level civilization?"

This third question caused a ruckus among the people gathered here. After all, the Hope had just finished a war with the space merchants. Therefore, it was very likely that information about them had been released by the space merchants to other alien races when they returned to their Shelter. There might've been Level 3 space civilizations among them.

However, there was an issue with this hypothesis, the problem of space and time to be specific.

Middle tier civilizations that hadn't entered level four had difficulty traveling the wide cosmos easily even with the usage of the warp drive. To borrow a simple analogy, the space merchants would spend at least one hundred years to complete a single business trip, and this was only the distance between two Shelters. If they were to spread human beings' information to the whole cosmos, it would require at least several thousand years.

But...

"We're not the only human spaceship," Xiao Niao finally said.

"That's right, this is why I posed the third question." Yao Yuan nodded and continued, "From the information we garnered from the space merchants, not all human refugees have been destroyed. Against all odds, they might have survived. Of course, they might have survived after being captured by high level space civilizations. If this is true, then the Noah One would be common knowledge to the other aliens. In that case, using the Noah One's signal to lure us in is a possibility."

As Yao Yuan was talking, two scientists left the room with the video of the Noah One's explosion. They would conduct validity tests on it. With the Hope's current technology, the tests would take less than a minute, but due to the gravity of the situation, after the first test was completed, another method was used to test it again. In any case, all available analysis software was used, and half an hour later, the report was brought back to the secret meeting room.

The video was 100 percent real. There was no evidence of tempering; however...

The energy profile produced during the explosion had some mistakes.

According to the central mainframe's calculation, the explosion's power wasn't the maximum power produced by the Noah One's

nuclear reactors. Simply put, the explosion's force was a lot smaller than expected. Based on the mass calculation, at most the explosion could only bring down one-fifth of the Noah One!

This again stunned everyone there!

In reality, the Hope hadn't really done any tests on the Noah One before. It had been fourteen years since they left Earth, so who would conduct tests on the Noah One for no reason? If not for this weird development, this issue would probably have been forgotten in a corner of human history.

However, at that moment, everyone knew that the Noah One had exploded, but the explosion wasn't enough to engulf the entire spaceship. In other words, it was likely that a large part of the spaceship had already warped while the remaining part that couldn't catch up exploded.

Of course, this didn't bode well for the spaceship as a whole. A spaceship was a whole structure. There weren't cases of spaceships still running after missing one-fifth of their bodies; that was too unrealistic...

However, reality was often stranger than fiction... What if the Noah One had found itself a habitable planet and survived?

What if, after warp, the rest of the ship didn't explode and a majority of the people had survived?

This was not a complete impossibility. According to quantum theory, unless it was already confirmed, nothing was "definite"...

Yao Yuan quickly picked up another document. This was also taken from Earth. It was the list of people on the Noah One...

21,000 plus trained soldiers from various countries, 7,000 technicians specializing in spaceships, space tech, and future tech, and... almost 3,000 scientists!

This was a miraculous find! If all these people were added into the Hope, the issue of manpower would be completely resolved!

Yao Yuan's eyes glowed. He turned to Xiao Niao and said, "Xiao Niao, follow me outside, I need you to do something for me..."

To confirm the reality about Noah One. If there was even a small possibility, no matter how big the risk or sacrifice, they must get everyone on it to join the Hope!

Chapter 288: Trade and Investigation

It might be hard to admit out loud, but everyone on the Hope understood that compared to the experts on the mini-sized escape spaceship, the Hope's members weren't really qualified experts.

To put it simply, the so-called researchers, professors, experts, and scientists might know a lot, but their knowledge was specialized. For example, a university's physics professor wouldn't know about the basics of the latest invisible jets (at least by 21st Earth scientific standards).

The scientists that knew about high end weapon technology would spend their time in the governments' employment. The public might not even know of their existence, much less meet them. This was the difference between public and the government's high tech department's scientists.

When the Hope left Earth, Yao Yuan had tried his best to locate the best scientists from all the countries, but his only reference was the knowledge he garnered from his head hunting years. It was logical that he would have missed out on people that he didn't know. Furthermore, the government-employed scientists would have been taken away by the mini-sized spaceship. After all, the mini-sized spaceship was led by Earth's best politicians, so of course they knew these scientists were the most valuable. How would they miss out on bringing them?

Therefore, even though the Hope's weapon system, be it siege engines or assault rifles, had related information and techniques, the research progress was still glacially slow. There was really only

one person on the Hope that knew a thing or two about these systems, and she was Bo Li. As a Whisperer, most of the Hope's weapon upgrades were her doing!

Then, we shall turn to look at the Noah One...

It was a spaceship created during the peak of the human era. The Earth's governments weren't privy to the existence of the neutron star fragment then. The spaceship was created using all of Earth's resources and the cooperation of 30,000 specially selected experts... These were the experts among experts. If the 3,000 scientists were to join the Hope, the Hope's scientific world would have an earth-shattering change. At the point, Yao Yuan perhaps wouldn't be concerned about Genesis but the Requiem instead.

Therefore, they had to get the people left on the Noah One!

After Yao Yuan and Xiao Niao entered a small, isolated room, Yao Yuan asked excitedly, "Xiao Niao, contact ZERO now. I have something important to ask her!"

Xiao Niao was not surprised by this demand; it was as if he knew this was what Yao Yuan was going to ask. He replied directly, "That's impossible, ZERO has told me clearly that at least before she has her own body, she will not talk to anyone besides me... Captain, do you plan to have ZERO bring us to the Noah One's signal's origin?"

Yao Yuan nodded firmly. "Of course, but it might not exactly be that. First we have no clue whether this signal is real or not or

whether is it a trap. Second, the signal's arrival was too sudden; it is as if the signal came out of the space around the Hope. There was no definite direction or source. This didn't feel like human technology, or at least not a technology from the 3rd or 4th revolutions. These are questions I have to ask ZERO."

Xiao Niao waved his hands and said, "ZERO will not meet you. If I'm perfectly honest, I don't think she'll even meet me if you're present... For some reason, I can tell that she is afraid of you, so she won't meet you."

"Afraid of me?" Yao Yuan pointed curiously at himself. After a long pause, he continued, "Stop kidding, I'm serious. She is a god-tier civilization's AI, and it would take her less than a few minutes to wipe out the entire spaceship. How can she be afraid of me?"

"It's your choice to believe it or not." Xiao Niao shrugged helplessly. He was too lazy to go into the difference between AI and intelligent life forms with Yao Yuan. He said, "I can't provide you with any proof, even if you demand it. This is just my personal instinct telling me that she is afraid of you, but... actually, that's not important. In conclusion, you want to find out about the authenticity of this signal and how it arrived, right?"

Yao Yuan continued seriously, "And the location of the signal's origin. I know ZERO can control the ship's space warp. She was the one who trapped us inside the new planet. Even though the mother nest alien did give us a lot of trouble, I still wish to thank her on behalf of the entirety of humanity. She gave us a few wonderful years on the new planet, and from that, we can see she has a degree of control over the space warp technology."

Xiao Niao thought about it and answered, "Alright, I will pose her these few questions, but I can't guarantee that she will answer. Also, one more thing, Yao Yuan, you have to be mentally prepared... She once said that there is price to pay for her to control the space warp. It sounded like she had paid a hefty sum for our earlier warps, so I have no clue whether she is still capable of controlling the Hope's future space warps."

Yao Yuan nodded understandingly and patted Xiao Niao on his shoulder. "Regardless, do help me ask her those questions. And tell her this... we humans are willing to provide her with anything she needs, other than our lives. We're willing to compensate her in any way we can. And we will remember this kindness that she showed us forever. Right, you mentioned she wanted to have a physical body when we have the technology to do that. You can tell her that I promise her that other than myself and those directly involved in creating that body, no one else will know about her identity. She will be able to live like a normal human being in our human society. This is what I promise."

Xiao Niao sighed and nodded. Then he left the meeting and went back to his room. He opened his computer and planted himself before it, waiting for ZERO to arrive.

He believed ZERO had the power to survey every corner of the Hope, so she must have heard his earlier conversation with Yao Yuan. Even if she didn't do so due to her fear of Yao Yuan, she would have known that he was waiting for her, since he had opened his computer. If she wanted to converse with him, she would arrive soon enough.

As he expected, a black screen took over the computer and some words appeared on it. "...You're here to ask me about the Noah One?"

"That's right, I have three questions. First, is the signal real? Does it come from the Noah One? Or is it a trap from some high level space civilization? Second, why would the Noah One's signal appear in this part of space? How did it get transferred? Last question... Do you know where the signal's location is?" Xiao Niao didn't hesitate and fired off all the questions at once.

After a long time, ZERO answered, "This signal is real and it appeared so suddenly is because it used the space warp technology. It is because of space warp communication technology that its appearance was so out of nowhere..."

"Space warp communication technology?" Xiao Niao copied and pasted this curious phrase back to her.

"That's right. To put it simply, the physical limit of speed in space is light speed; no signal can surpass this limit. The warp drive technology that you're researching uses the folding of space to surpass this limit, but you have to understand that while mass itself can fold space, messages and signals cannot. This is because messages cannot create such a large amount of energy to fold the space around the signals. Even wormholes can't make signals achieve the speed of light. You will need technology like the star gate to do that, a permanent and stable worm hole. This allows messages to break the light speed barrier, but that is also only at the two ends of the star gate," ZERO replied.

Even though Xiao Niao wasn't a scientist, he was a Thinker. He knew a thing or two about basic science. He processed the information ZERO provided and understood it after some time. The meaning was fairly simple, a spaceship could use the device and technology within the spaceship to break through light speed, but pure signals could not do that. After it was launched into space, it would travel at most the same as speed as light through space. That was the basic law of the cosmos.

"And space warp communication technology uses space warp to transfer information. The message goes from Point A to Point B, it doesn't involve any space folding like the warp drive or wormholes. Instead, the signal directly disappeared from Point A and reappeared at Point B. This is why the arrival of this signal from the Noah One is so sudden and without alarm..."

Xiao Niao's expression was serious. He typed, "Then the signal has to be a fake. We still haven't obtained this technology, and from the sound of it, this is some complicated, high level technology. I don't think the people from Noah One have mastered it."

"No, the signal is real. So many years ago, due to the lack of energy and low quality energy circuits, the space warp of the Noah One was incomplete and unsuccessful... Now, the situation of Noah One is as follows: around 3/5 was warped successful, 1/5 blew up near Earth, and the last 1/5 showcases a status of being in spatial transition wave. This signal came from this last 1/5 of the Noah One. This should be a natural signal coming from this part of the Noah One and not a manual signal..."

"3/5 of Noah One is still intact!"

Chapter 289: Rescue Plan! Another Warp!

At least 3/5 of Noah One was still intact! This confirmation by ZERO was definitely weighty.

As mentioned earlier, the Noah One was completely different from the Hope in the sense that its members were the best of the best selected from all the countries. The military on it was the most trained and disciplined special ops. If these soldiers were saved and recruited into the Hope, then the Defence Unit's numbers would increase manifold!

Of course, whether they would be controllable was another issue. However, Xiao Niao knew that Yao Yuan was the leader of Black Star Units, one of the best special ops units from Earth, so his existence was akin to a soldier king. Plus, with the Black Star Troopers behind his back, having their loyalty wouldn't be such a big issue.

In comparison, he was more excited to get more information from ZERO.

"Then can you triangulate the Noah One's location?" Xiao Niao typed in a hurry.

ZERO took another long pause before replying, "I can, but it will not be accurate. Actually, in space, coordinate triangulation in the wide cosmos isn't as accurate as it is on a terrestrial planet. The coordinates wouldn't be accurate enough to reach the accuracy of centimeters. This is especially true about space warp.

Triangulation is done through wave functions, and that in itself is randomized. Therefore, it took me several trials before I could bring you guys to the mother nest alien. However, I do know the Noah One's coordinates."

She knows? What does she mean by that? Xiao Niao didn't want to waste time thinking about it, so he quickly typed, "Then can you bring the Hope there?"

This time ZERO took an even longer pause, so much so that Xiao Niao thought she had left. However, she eventually answered, "I can... but why would I? To tell you the truth, using the function inside the UFO requires... anyway, it exhausts me a lot. The world inside the UFO is not something you human beings can imagine; it's a completely different world. Like I've told you, I'm an intelligent lifeform and not AI, so I also can completely control the UFO..."

Xiao Niao's mind rang with alarm. He quickly replied, "We're on the same boat now, aren't we? You know what this idiom means, right? The Hope is lacking in manpower, or more specifically, people from Earth that are experts. This is why our scientific progress has been so slow, and the Noah One has just that..."

"I know," ZERO wrote, interrupting Xiao Niao. "Of course I know that. The Noah One's space warping is possible because I intervened to control the space warp. At the time, I didn't know using the device inside the UFO would exhaust me... Now I regret it, so no matter how hard they call on me, I ignore them."

Xiao Niao continued, "Since you know about the Noah One, you

should know how important they are to us. Please help us with this favor, pretty please."

"I don't want to!" ZERO replied directly. "I have no idea how much I have to sacrifice, and you only care about yourself.... Selfish! In conclusion, I will not do this, this is not something discussable!"

Xiao Niao read her hesitation between the lines. He immediately typed in Yao Yuan's offer to sweeten the pot, "ZERO, think about it, if our human science increases, then you will get the body that you want sooner. Without the Noah One, I can live for at least another 150 years, but even in 150 years, we will not be able to make you a physical body. This means I will not be alive to see you become a real human. So you see, helping us is helping yourself."

ZERO pause for the longest time before saying, "... Give me three months. I will try my best to bring you to the Noah One, but I have to say, this time it will not be as accurate as locating the mother nest alien. We might have to warp many times, but the general direction will not be wrong. However, I still have to warn you, and you tell Yao Yuan and the rest about this... Remember, the limit for this is only three to five years, within three to five years, if you still can't locate the Noah One, then you will give up because the neutron star fragment will arrive at the solar system they're in, so going there will be akin to suicide.

"Finally, I'll not be doing this for free, so you have to promise me one more thing. I still haven't thought about what yet, so you owe me twice now! Remember, when it comes time to repay me, no matter how hard my demand, you have to fulfil it!"

After the last sentence, ZERO left, and to show her annoyance, she even shut down Xiao Niao's computer. However, Xiao Niao no longer cared about her or the computer. His brain was filled with much needed information and happiness. After all, the people on the Noah One were also human refugees and resources needed by the Hope, so it was hard for Xiao Niao not to be happy.

Very soon, Xiao Niao relayed his conversation with ZERO to Yao Yuan and Ren Tao as well as Bo Li, who was with them.

"...That's what she said. From what we know, space warp can be controlled, but the control is greatly limited. By what, I have no clue," Yao Yuan concluded after he told them everything.

Yao Yuan immediately turned to Bo Li beside him. "How can we use randomized wave functions to control the direction and location of space warp?"

Bo Li shook her head and replied rather hesitantly, "I have no idea. Wave function in quantum theory mentions that if there is no observer, the wave function of a thing or person will have an unpredictable change in its process and result. It should have nothing to do with space warp... No, she is probably talking about something else completely."

Bo Li petered off to silence. Yao Yuan and the other two looked at each other and shrugged helplessly. Regarding high tech stuff, mankind was too weak, so even if they were told the theory, it would be difficult to understand how it operated. Therefore, they

moved away from the technology and started discussing other things.

"If we warp in three months, then we will have to prepare everything in these three months. First, the Space Combat Jet Prototype 011s. If manufactured at full speed in these three months, we can reach up to 250 sets. This is the limit. The black star space armors, are still in design, so we'll have to rely on the old armors. Lastly, the upgrade on the Hope..."

Yao Yuan sighed. "After all, we've only been here for one and a half years. Then again, the Noah One is more important. After three months, we will ask ZERO to start warping."

Suddenly, Ren Tao added, "Have you thought about the possibility that... it was not only us who received this signal? After all, the Noah One's signal was sent out through space using the space warp's randomized motion. Of course, the chance of us receiving it is higher since we have the similar space warp engine, but this doesn't preclude other alien civilizations from receiving it as well. Have you thought about that? The closer they are to the Noah One, the greater the chance they will receive the signal from Noah One. Possibly Level 2, 3, or even 4 civilizations are rushing towards it. Do you think the Hope has any chance of winning over them?"

Yao Yuan was silent before answering, "Of course I've thought about that, but this is the only chance we have of securing the people on the Noah One, so no matter what, we have to try. Of course, if we really stumble into an enemy that we cannot beat, I will not repeat the mistake I committed with the space merchants.

So don't worry, I will order the Hope to warp immediately. Furthermore, we have Eva with us. If she senses the Hope's extinction, we will immediately give up on the Noah One..."

Ren Tao shook his head silently before parting and walking towards the secret meeting room. Xiao Niao and Yao Yuan followed behind him. Of course, it was Yao Yuan who pulled along Bo Li, who was still in thinking mode...

In the meeting room, Yao Yuan announced that the Hope would start warping in three months. Due to some special technology, the Hope could attempt to get closer to the Noah One's location. Of course, this would likely be a treacherous journey, so the Hope had to prepare for possible combat. Production on AI robots had to be stopped to focus on producing Space Combat Jet Prototype 011s, enhancing the space armors, and improving the Hope's outer armor...

As the meeting came to a close, Yao Yuan concluded, "Everyone, I will not waste time to say more. I think everyone here understands the Noah One's importance to us. Therefore, let us work together to complete the most important mission since we've left Earth!

"Operation Rescue!"

Just like that, three months later, the Hope warped again and disappeared from that part of space...

Chapter 290: Silent Journey

It had been half a year since the Hope had left that part of space, and within that half year, the Hope had only warped twice...

Yes, with the Hope's upgraded energy circuits and the ample energy provided by the polymerized reactors, the Hope could warp at least 10 times every 24 hours.

However, those kinds of warps were completely random; they couldn't be controlled. And in comparison, the two most recent warps were "controlled" warps. In other words, this meant that the Hope knew the location it was warping to, and the exit they would end up at wouldn't be more than 10 light years away from their intended target coordination.

According to the information revealed by ZERO, this is a technology open to Level 6 space civilizations, or mid-high level civilizations after they had mastered the technology of star gates. It was a highly sophisticated space exploration technology that used a host of irregular calculation techniques and quantum entanglement frequency division techniques, technology which mankind hadn't even heard of.

In conclusion, mankind, in its Level 2 space civilization stage, used technology that was available to high level space civilizations, half-controllable space warp!

According to ZERO's calculations, the Hope needed to warp at least five times before they could reach the Noah One's signal's

origin. These five warps would happen in the intervals of three months each due to the limitations put on ZERO. In other words, these five warps would take fifteen months. Discounting the earlier three months spent idling in space, the Hope still had to stop for a total of one year at four different places!

This was unimaginably dangerous because no one knew what would happen after they warped. They might encounter some space catastrophe or hostile aliens. Furthermore, they wouldn't be able to warp in that three months down period, or the earlier controlled warps would be wasted. In other words, if the Hope didn't want to waste their effort, no matter the danger, they had to wait for the three months to finish every time!

Just like that, before the first warp was initiated and the Hope was still at that empty space, an operation that would last for the next year was initiated... Operation Safety Travel!

This was a plan that involved the overall improvement of the Hope and the survival of people on Noah One. This was a plan that would find itself in the history books because its effect would be felt for centuries. If succeeded, the scientific talent aside, the trained Special Ops from Earth would be more than enough to introduce indescribable change to the Hope's Defense Unit!

Not to mention the Homo Evolutis on the Noah One...

Silent Journey was a plan specially tailored for all this. In other words, it was the plan to rescue the Noah One.

After the first warp, the Hope still had to warp four times, and after each warp, the Hope had to take a three month break. The Hope couldn't warp anymore in these three months, or the earlier effort would go to waste. Of course, if absolutely necessary, like when facing the threat of extinction, warping would still be done.

Therefore, the fact that whether ZERO was still willing to initiate another five space warps for the Hope aside, it was impossible from the perspective of time. This was because ZERO had already told Xiao Niao, according to her calculations, that a neutron star fragment would arrive at the solar system where the Noah One had landed in three to five years. If they wasted any one of the controlled space warps, then they wouldn't be able to save anyone from the Noah One!

Not only that, according to ZERO, since the Noah One's signal was released randomly through space, the space civilizations around the Noah One would receive it as well. Of course, the distance would be an issue. With warp drive, the distance that one could cover was around 60 to 140 light years. The distance might seem huge, but compared to the size of the cosmos and density of space civilizations, it was more than likely not one space civilization would reach Noah One.

However... reality was often stranger than fiction. No one could guarantee there was no space civilization within 60 to 140 light years of the Noah One. If there was one and it was rushing towards the Noah One, it meant that the civilization had warp drive technology, because those without warp drive wouldn't have wasted their time.

To put it simply, if there was another space civilization other than humanity itself rushing towards the Noah One, it meant that the civilization had access to warp drive technology, in other words, it was at the peak of Level 2 space civilizations or had even entered Level 3 Space Civilization, it would be stronger than the space merchants...

Also, one couldn't ignore the possibility of wormhole civilizations, civilizations that had stepped over the low level civilization threshold, and civilizations that had entered level 5 or 6 mid-level space civilizations. If they did make an appearance, low level space civilizations would be trapped like lobsters in a cage. According to the information provided by the space merchants, mid-level civilizations were powerful enough to shatter planets the size of Earth and collect their internal energy and minerals that way. The method was unimaginable!

Because of this, humanity, as a civilization that just became a Level 2 space civilization, would be the weakest before any of these space civilizations. The more warps they made, the closer they were to the Noah One, and the greater the possibility of running into these other civilizations. Under these circumstances, the three months waiting periods were like torture. They had to figure out a way to effectively evade the detection of other more advanced civilizations!

Yes, in the three months after ZERO started her first warp, the Hope's higher officials gathered with a large number of tactical experts to discuss the possible outcomes of each warp. Discounting space catastrophes, the biggest danger was stumbling into hostile alien civilizations. Currently, the Hope was like a huge target for these civilizations. Waging another war was definitely an unwise

decision.

It was foolish to commit to a war when mankind was at a disadvantage and when mankind had the potential to grow to be better than them all. Because of this, the experts scoured their minds to come up with the safest and easiest solutions to save the Noah One. This plan was called Silent Journey.

This was a famous hypothesis preferred when mankind was discussing the possibility of aliens. The hypothesis was the Dark Jungle Theory. Simply put, when the greatest speed in space was light speed and one couldn't cross the barrier of space and time, going from one location to the next required hundreds, thousands, or maybe millions of years. This caused suspicion and untrustworthiness among the different civilizations. Therefore, each civilization had to hide themselves to prevent themselves from being found out by other civilizations.

According to this theory, the cosmos was so deserted because the other civilizations were hiding in the dark, unwilling to let their locations be exposed to others. This time, the Hope intended to employ this method, a silent journey, one that wouldn't expose the Hope's existence to others. Actual precautions that went into this plan included shutting down all devices that would give off light, and there was a two-month-long upgrade on the Hope's surface. The upgrade was to introduce a layer of creator's particle generators, and beyond that layer of creator's particle was added another layer of creator's particle shielding systems. In other words, the whole of the Hope was covered by a layer of creator's particles that wouldn't spread. This would ensure that all of the signals from within the Hope wouldn't escape into space.

Other than that, the Hope's surface was also equipped with a shield that blocked all external surveillance. The Hope was like an insignificant metallic object travelling in space. After all, the Hope's size didn't look like the conventional size of a civilization's mother ship. Therefore, even if they were detected by other civilizations, as long as they didn't take a closer look, the Hope would most likely be ignored because no other civilization would utilize this method to hide themselves. Since shielding went both ways, the Hope had also practically blinded and deafened themselves. This was akin to the dodo bird sticking its head into the ground, thinking others couldn't see it because it couldn't see others. Therefore, at the end of the day, luck would play a huge part in this plan. If the ship was attacked, it would be swift and without warning.

Thankfully, the Hope had its own back up surveillance system in the form of Diviners and a Sage that could see one month into the future...

This was the only reason Yao Yuan gave this Silent Journey plan the go-ahead.

Finally, there were only six months and another two space warps to go...

Chapter 291: Complicated Emotions

Six more months later and it would be another three months before the next controllable warp. In other words, the Hope was going to stop for three months in space.

This latest stop made everyone on the Hope widen their eyes in shock, then it was followed by a complicated feelings of both excitement and disappointment.

This was because the latest warp location was inside a solar system, one with a functioning sun, multiple gas giants, more than ten terrestrial planets, and multiple asteroid belts. The sun was orange-red in color, larger in size than Earth's sun. The whole solar system was larger than Earth's solar system. It was a slice of a God-given paradise!

From the information gathered from ZERO and the space merchants, every space civilization that had found a life-preserving planet would be assaulted by a neutron star fragment in three to five years. However, it was different for non-life-preserving planets. One could live there for millions upon millions of years, and if nothing severe happened within the solar system, one could live there forever.

Changing a non-life-preserving planet to a life-preserving planet was an impossibility, at least it was impossible for civilizations under level 9. This was something accessible to god-tier space civilizations only, but of course, this was all rumour. The biggest issue in this was that non-life-preserving planets didn't have the ability to produce "soul." What was the first one must do to

completely terraform a non-life preserving planet?

The answer was not building skyscrapers, or population migration. The first thing to do was to cultivate plants, a large amount of plants, be it terrestrial or aquatic... Of course, if the race didn't need oxygen to survive, they would have to cultivate other plants that released the air they needed.

However, one mustn't miss out on the law of preservation of life. This law not only dictated the souls of intelligent lifeforms but also that of flora and fauna. It was just that normally they used so little "soul" that they were not taken into the equation. However, what about when it was an amount that was needed to cover a whole planet? The "soul" exhaustion would be humongous. Plus, this would not be a one time investment. As they died, new "souls" would have to be injected. From this perspective, non-life-preserving planets were actually soul killing planets!

Therefore, there was no such thing as an artificial planet, not because the technology wasn't there, but the conditions couldn't be fulfilled. Unless the planet was housing more than a hundred Homo Evolutis, then perhaps that would be enough to fulfil the "soul" exhaustion and cycle of the planet. However, which race would have more than 100 cosmic adapters?

Well, human beings did!

This was why the Hope was submerged in a haze of complicated feelings. With the technologies taken from the space merchants, after mankind completely breaks through the nanobot technology, mankind will have reached the peak of the 4th revolution and will

have access to ways to terraform a planet, to make its environment suitable for living. In other words, they will be able to manually create a life-preserving planet. Since it was not a life-preserving planet to begin with, it wouldn't be targeted by a neutron star fragment, and mankind could enjoy nature on this planet. Of course, this wouldn't last forever. The moment the number of Homo Evolutis among mankind fell beneath the 100 threshold, the environment would wilt and mankind would be forced to escape into space again. However, it would be hundreds of years before that would happen.

This was one of the future human plans stored in the Hope's central mainframe, Project Base. Mankind would find an insignificant solar system and use at least a decade to terraform a terrestrial planet. After that, mankind could populate the planet so that the population size won't be hindered by the Hope's limited space. This will allow the new generation to enjoy and realize the importance of nature. At the same time, this planet would be the base for mankind's spaceship fleet. Mankind would have spaceships that would explore space using space warp technology. In this manner, mankind would slowly enter the fifth revolution and become a level 3 space civilization or something even stronger....

Project Base was the perfect resting and resuscitation plan tailored for mankind. However, there were a few difficulties to overcome. One was the technology required to terraform a planet, because it might involve technology from the 5th revolution. The second was the limitation of time. The 10 years was a rough estimate, it might take up to possibly a hundred years to terraform a planet.

The last difficulty was the third one, a perfectly safe solar system. This was something hard to find. Alas, the one they had found themselves in fitted this requirement perfectly. It was a large solar system with a large amount of terrestrial planets, so human beings could choose the most perfect one for transformation. They could take into account the different planets' gravity, rotational speed, and distance from the sun. At the same time, the other planets would become places to store mineral wealth. Even the gas giants could provide an endless supply of gaseous minerals. Some super weapons from 5th revolution, like implosion grenades, used these gases as the main ingredient!

In conclusion, this solar system was too important to the Hope. Even just a small degree of resource mining was better than none. If possible, they would want to build a new spaceship, but all that had to be abandoned due to the Noah One. The Hope couldn't use the propulsion device, because it would violate the law of space inertia, and if there was a space civilization nearby, the Hope would light up like a beacon in the dark. Therefore, the Hope could only idle in space.

Everyone in the Hope eyed this solar system with complicated emotions. A perfect resource gathering spot, a solar system that would be perfect for the construction of a human base. If the Hope was to do this the normal way, it would take several thousand random warps before it would land in a location this good. Such an opportunity... such a waste!

"... So many resources gone to waste."

Inside the Hope's canteen, the leader of the energy department

sighed and groused to the officials that were sitting at the same table.

This was a normal lunch meeting. Many government officials and servants would have lunch at the canteen. They were served a fixed portion, but they could use their own H-coins to purchase more. For example, the menu that day was prime steaks. The perfect accompaniment would be a glass of wine. Of course, that was luxury only those with high enough ranks could enjoy.

At this moment, the energy department leader was sharing the table with a few others officials. They were all middle to high ranking officers in the government. One of them was Lee Cheng Wen, who was enjoying a bowl of beef noodles. When the energy leader offered his complaints, Cheng Wen frowned but didn't elaborate.

The officer sitting on the other side also added, "It is a waste. The Hope's storage might still have plenty, but we've already exhausted half of the full capacity. The biggest exhaustion came from those scientists, and this month's quota from them has increased again. Furthermore, the captain wants to increase the investment quotient towards the Genesis project. The supply quota will increase by 20 percent. If this continues, the Hope's supply will drop below the critical threshold..."

The few other officials nodded in agreement, only Cheng Wen said, with a smile, "But the Genesis is currently the Hope's strongest weapon, so it has to be built. Plus, it is being hosted by Professor Bo Li and is progressing well. There is no waste of resources. That is the best situation, isn't it?"

The officers nodded, but some of them still said, "Yes, the Genesis is related to the Hope's survival and shouldn't be dismissed, but this opportunity before us shouldn't be missed either. A stable and large solar system. Who knows how many resources we can mine from here? Probably more than enough to create a spaceship fleet as big as a small planet. We can use them to increase the security of the Hope. However, all of this have to be given up simply because of those humans on the Noah One..."

The officer's voice petered off to a whisper until no one could hear him anymore.

Cheng Wen sighed inwardly. The thing that he was most afraid of had occurred. The decision to begin a war was decided by profit, but the decision to continue a war or not was decided by the bearing capacity of the citizens.

Frankly, a war was fought with blood because the blood of one's fellow man would inspire the will to fight. This was bound to happen during war. Sometimes, this blood came from a hero, sometimes the innocent, and sometimes the blood was "forced" out by the government. The saying "slaughter a town to alert the whole country" has its truth...

Cheng Wen could pick up from the hidden threats from these officers' tones. If the citizens lost their desire to save their fellow man from the Noah One, then how would the Hope's high officials squash this selfish or self-preserving ideals burgeoning in the citizens?

The hero's blood, the innocent's blood, or the blood "flowing" from governmental suppression?

Maybe it's time for me to step in...

Cheng Wen sighed as he came to a decision. He didn't forget that he was also a Thinker, a hidden Thinker on the Hope...

Chapter 292: Dark Strategy

Cheng Wen had long since been promoted from his earlier role of the Hope's human resource department's vice leader to its leader. He oversaw everything related to human resources on the Hope. In a way, he was one of the influential people on the Hope.

He was a hardworking and capable officer, and he wouldn't intervene in places where his presence was not needed. Even though it was because of him that many original government workers from Country Z were pulled from obscurity and made powerful officers. the Hope still relied on a system of fair meritocracy. Therefore, as the years passed, Cheng Wen's position slowly stabilized, his power as great as the power that government officials from Country Z enjoyed.

Even though the event from a few years ago had stopped the interactions between government workers, those interactions couldn't be completely prevented. Eventually, liaisons between officials became common again. Of course, there wasn't anything illegal about them.

Cheng Wen, as the human resource leader, an original officer from Country Z, had great influence on the Hope and was rumoured to be highly valued by Yao Yuan. Therefore, many Country Z government workers liked to align themselves with Cheng Wen. Even though Cheng Wen was selective in the friends he made, those that had relationships with him all felt impressed by him. Cheng Wen had the presence to make them believe in him.

That Sunday, Cheng Wen was sitting across from two individuals

with a pot of tea brewing between them. Cheng Wen had invited them over for afternoon tea to discuss the things happening on the Hope. Cheng Wen made use of a television program to unconsciously segue into the Hope's current situation.

"The current situation is quite dangerous, isn't it? Even though we have started the Silent Journey plan, there is no telling whether we will run into aliens or not, and if we do, it'll be another war." Cheng Wen sighed as he took another sip of his tea.

"You are so right," a slightly overweight middle aged man grouched as he sipped his tea. "After this plan to save the Noah One was announced, there were complaints coming from the public. This latest warp has dropped us into a large and safe solar system. This caused some unrest among the citizens. Truth be told, being in the PR department now is not enviable."

This middle-aged man was a middle-ranking officer in the Hope's Public Relations Department. He was another Country Z officer that rose in position during the face slap operation a few years ago. His rank might've been low, but he held a certain degree of influence on the Hope.

On the note of the Hope's government structure, after so many years of adapting and changing, its structure had slowly started to mirror the structure of a cabinet. Everyone answered to the Chancellor, but other than that, the members of a department only answered to the responsibility of their own department. For example, the PR department was responsible for the information transfer happening within the Hope, including television, internet, and paper media. Yao Yuan wouldn't order them to do stuff and

allowed them to work out their own rules organically. Therefore, if there were any misgivings within the department, it would be the responsibility of the PR Department's members to hand in their own resignation letter.

This was why the PR Department's members, like the middle-aged man, would complain when the citizens of the Hope started to complain. After all, to save the Noah One was Yao Yuan's decision, but the PR Department was faulted by the public because they mishandled the information promotion and direction. In the department, many felt unfairly judged.

"Actually, there are ways for the PR Department to make use of this situation." The complaint was what Cheng Wen was waiting for. However, he didn't blurt out his plan but went about it leisurely.

The middle-aged man was first surprised and then asked excitedly, "You really have a plan? Brother Lee, you're famed for your intellect. If you really have any bright ideas, please help us out. The PR Department is having a fit. Outside the Hope is a large solar system, filled to the brim with resources, but we can only stay here and idle and wait for two more space warps. Honestly, at least 30 percent the citizens are having second thoughts about this whole operation to save the Noah One..."

"30 percent?" The other middle-aged man chuckled. "That is an underestimation. I would believe it if you said half. After all, the progress on the Hope is going smoothly, and the population number is reaching the Hope's limit. Unless we can create a larger mother ship in the next decade, the Hope will be extremely

crowded. And with the increase in the population, the resource levels will be dangerous as well. And let's not forget the people we're going to save are people from Earth's governments, not the mention the possible dangers we might stumble into."

The others didn't rebut, because everything he said was the truth. The Hope was enjoying smooth progress. Be it population, life quality, or science, everything was improving. Becoming a Level 3 space civilization was something inevitable, so must they risk so much to save these people from Earth?

After all, who knew how many original government officials there would be? These people... were the ones who decided to abandon Earth with no regards for other human beings.

Therefore, even though Yao Yuan's immense influence had made this project a reality, since no one dared to object, a hidden resentment among the public was something unavoidable, and this could be the threat that ripped the Hope from within.

Cheng Wen took another sip of his tea and smiled. "No matter how many people are having suspicions on this decision, it is undeniable that the PR Department is currently under great pressure. Therefore, why doesn't your department broadcast some documentaries to counter this situation?"

"Documentaries?" The others repeated in curiosity. The slightly overweight man asked directly, "What kind of documentaries? The government propagandas from Earth? Or war documentaries on heroes that we've lost?"

Cheng Wen shook his head. "According to the current situation, one of the biggest possibilities are war with alien civilizations, so why don't we broadcast footage of our war with the space merchants? The videos of them storming the Hope and the fights between our Defense Unit soldiers. The videos of how savage they were and how they had captured us. Then get some experts to educate the public on how to save themselves, how to find a safe location to hide, when to run when faced with this kind of situation. Isn't that the best kind of documentary to broadcast at this juncture?"

The surprise was evident. They put down their tea cups and looked at Cheng Wen hesitatingly. The slightly overweight man said, "Cheng Wen... but wouldn't this make the public complain even more? This will make them even more afraid of war with aliens, and the Chancellor will probably be forced to take action... Cheng Wen, you have to be careful about what you say, since we have those earlier representatives as examples."

This was honest advice from the man. What were those earlier representatives that were fired? They were those that wanted to challenge Yao Yuan's influence and spread nasty rumors about him. However, they underestimated the hold Yao Yuan had over the Hope's public. Their plans failed from the beginning. Furthermore, Yao Yuan was from Country Z, so the current Country Z people wouldn't plot against Yao Yuan in the dark.

Cheng Wen laughed. "That will not happen, you people are overthinking this. Plus, I'm just giving a suggestion. Furthermore, the Chancellor is a fair person. As long as the documentaries are not falsified and not released behind his back, then he won't come

after anyone as he wishes. Furthermore, isn't the Hope currently facing this threat? This will be precaution for the public, to improve our survivability in case of war. This will be the contribution of these videos. Regarding public opinion... How about we make a bet? Have the PR Department do what I suggested, and after seven days, if the public still has suspicions against saving the Noah One, then I will hand in my resignation and the PR Department can say that this was my idea. I will shoulder the responsibility. How about that?"

The slightly overweight man frowned but still laughed and said, "Brother Lee sure likes to joke. We're in a cabinet system, so we will not push the blame to someone else, but since this is Cheng Wen's suggestion, then I wouldn't mind proposing it to my leader. He'll make the final decision. After all, I'm just a lowly government servant..."

Just like that, three days later, the Hope's newspaper, television, and internet changed up their usual offerings from praises on the Hope to the introduction of dangers in space, including the various alien space civilizations, the videos on the fight with space merchants, the death toll of the Defense Unit after the war, and the current number of soldiers on the Hope...

In the week after the promotion period, the public's opinion regarding this project to save the Noah One gradually moved towards negative. In fact, the uproar had gotten so intense that it had reached the House of Representatives, but before the week ended, the public opinion made a complete 180. More than 60 percent was in support of the project because the member list on the Noah One was also released in this period. It had more than 30,000 Special Ops soldiers from Earth...

Therefore, in less than half a month, the internal strife that was burgeoning met its end. All over the Hope, only a small fraction of people maintained a suspicion against this plan, and the majority was in support of Yao Yuan's decision.

Lee Cheng Wen's resume and history once again found its way to Yao Yuan's table...

Chapter 293: Kun Lun and Prediction

With the documentaries, the public was slowly led to understand the meaning behind saving the Noah One, so the riots petered out and life returned to normal. They started planning for their future. After all, the one leading the Hope was the great hero, Yao Yuan.

Time slowly flew by and without one realizing, it had been one and a half months. The next scheduled warp was going to happen in another one and a half months. People had started to miss this peaceful solar system.

"...Ol' Yao, since there is still another one and a half months and Eva didn't see a bad future, can we try mining some resources?" Guang Zhen asked Yao Yuan openly as he sat across Yao Yuan's table.

Yao Yuan focused on his documents and replied without taking his eyes off the reports. "This couldn't have been your idea. Tell me, what you want to do?"

Guang Zhen chuckled and said, "Ol' Yao, you also know that the proposal to upgrade of Defense Unit's standard weapons has been handed in quite some time ago but has been constantly delayed due to the Genesis Project and the Black Star Troopers' Space Armor 2, as well as experimentation with mini plasma weapons. We cannot let this drag on anymore. After all, the Defense Unit is the Hope's strongest army after the Black Star Troopers. Therefore, I went searching for the scientists responsible for these weapon designs."

Guang Zhen didn't go out of line, because even though Yao Yuan was the Hope's Chancellor, the Hope's government wasn't really a dictatorship. Furthermore, Guang Zhen was the Hope's second in command, and he had Yao Yuan's complete trust. If he wanted, he could reassign Defense Unit soldiers and even Black Star Troopers without consulting Yao Yuan. Therefore, meeting the scientists was well within his power.

Yao Yuan started laughing, shook his head, and looked at Guang Zhen. "You're here on their behalf, aren't you? They didn't dare to approach me themselves because this relates to the Hope's survivability. If they make the wrong decision and anything happens to the Hope, they wouldn't be able to bear the responsibility, so they hinted for you to come see me. They must have said something about the low resource levels on the Hope not being enough to upgrade the weapons of thousands of Defense Unit soldiers, right?"

Guang Zhen also laughed. He grabbed the cup of tea on the table and took a sip. "Of course, I knew they were sending me on a difficult task, but I was indeed shocked when I paid a visit to our storage room. It has been only how many years since we left the new planet? The resources that we predicted would last for several decades have already been exhausted by fifty percent. Energy storage is slightly better due to the polymerized reactors, the level maintains at 70 percent, but the moment we start to use the high-tech plasmatic technology, the energy storage will drastically lower, especially if we commit to warp drive... I had no idea it was already looking so bad for the Hope."

Yao Yuan didn't reply. He sifted through the documents on his table and pulled from it one report and passed it to Guang Zhen. As

Guang Zhen read it, his expression darkened.

The report was written by Bo Li, the latest update on the Hope's science development. It reported on the Hope's storage levels, including the 50 percent material storage and 70 percent energy storage. The report brought up the issue of increased exhaustion with the advancement in science. High tech scientific experiments and products would require a large amount of materials.

Other than that, the higher the technological level, the greater the amount of energy it would exhaust. This could be easily understood with a simple analogy, the prehistoric man could survive with a campfire, but modern man required gas, coal, and electricity. Therefore, an improvement in science would normally lead to a material and energy crisis (back on Earth, this was called environmental crisis).

The report concluded with a projection into the future. It predicted that the Hope's storage would be emptied in the next three years. After these three years, the Hope would have nothing left, so it would have to restock before then.

Guang Zhen's face was drawn because according to this report, the Hope could only survive for another three years. Three years... this was a short period of time even back on Earth, much less in space. He turned towards Yao Yuan anxiously. "Ol' Yao, we have to do something. I find this report by Bo Li to be extremely reliable. Since we've reached the critical threshold, why don't we stop to resupply here?"

Yao Yuan shook his head. "We cannot do that, because nothing is

more important than saving the Noah One. Therefore, we cannot stop and start mining. Furthermore, Ol' Wong, I want to ask you one question: do you think we took too few materials and energy sources when we left new planet?"

"Of course not," Guang Zhen denied it immediately. "We filled the Hope back then..."

By then, Guang Zhen knew what the problem was. Yao Yuan continued, "Looks like you too have realized the issue. It was not that we didn't take enough, but the size of this ship didn't allow us to take more. When we left the new planet, the Hope was already filled to the brim, but what was the result? The resources that were predicted to last us for several decades was halved in just a few years. The remaining can only last us for another three years. What does this suggest? The Hope this too small.

"Now I finally understand why those space civilizations' mother ships are always the size of a small planet. Other than population, the other big thing is resource storage. Think about it, for a large civilization that needs to survive for thousands of years in space, how large would their storage have to be? I'm afraid one will really need to break open a terrestrial planet to satisfy their resource exhaustion."

Yao Yuan then pulled out another report for Guang Zhen. "Read this. After the conclusion of this Noah One project, be it success or fail, this will be our next step and our main mission."

The report was sealed with a red double-S stamp, signifying the report's confidentiality level. Currently, the reports that had

reached that level of confidentiality were all related to the Hope's life and death, something to do with the hope of humanity. The number of people that had access to double-S files were less than five, and Guang Zhen was one of them.

He flied through the report cautiously and the first page was a construction design. It was full of data, structure, layers, and elaborations of many kinds of weapons. The whole design looked like a giant mountain, and the general shape was oval with a large base and cinched in top.

"This is the new generation of human mothership that has been secretly designed by Bo Li and her group. It is large enough to accommodate millions upon millions of people. It will be fitted with a large amount of anti-gravitational units, but sadly enough, with our current computing power, even including the AI robots, we cannot calculate this mother ship's anti-gravity balance. Therefore, this mothership cannot land on a terrestrial planet but only exist as a space base...

"It is called Kun Lun! Humanity's real space mothership!"

As Guang Zhen listened to Yao Yuan and studied the design, his heart lit up with passion.

This was a product designed using 5th revolution, or level 3 space civilization level, technology. Many designs and technologies were not available to mankind yet, but they would be there in the next 10 years. In other words, in another ten years, progress on the Kun Lun could start in earnest!

The mothership was 674,000 meters tall, 540,000 meters long, and 300,000 meters wide. Its size was several thousand times the Hope's size. It would have 12 super large polymerized reactors, 36 large reactors, and 72 mid-sized reaction. At the same time, the energy circuit would be upgraded to the plasma system and there would be 8 Genesis cannons and 1 Requiem. At the same time, it would also have innumerable Gaussian heavy artillery weapons and a propulsion system using a super large particle acceleration that enables it to commit to warp drive and space warp...

This would be the Kun Lun! Mankind's strongest product at the 5th revolution period while being a low level civilization.

"F*ck! This is amazing! This data is too unbelievable. With our access to the alien plant's super alloy, especially that superconductor that is perfect for creating energy circuits, the Kun Lun's electromagnetic shield will be beyond our imagination. With that strong of a shield, even if we physically run into a spaceship like the space merchants', theirs will be slammed into pieces! Build, we must build this!"

After Guang Zhen finished reading the report, he was laughing with an excited blush. Yao Yuan nodded with a smile. Just as he was going to say something, his communicator rang. He frowned while looking at the caller ID. After he picked it up, his smile turned into a thin line.

After he put down the communicator, Guang Zhen asked immediately, "Why? What's wrong?"

"That was Eva..."

Yao Yuan looked at Guang Zhen and said, "She saw images of the future, where 29 days from now, aliens will board the Hope!"

Chapter 294: Cannot Warp?

The one who made the call was not Eva but Eva's personal Thinker, Ren Tao. After he heard the story from Eva, he told Yao Yuan the news immediately and pulled Eva towards the Hope's captain's room.

Yao Yuan didn't delay either. He told Guang Zhen immediately, "Ol' Wong this is very important, I will call Xiao Niao, Bo Li... and a few others to join us. We have to keep the number small because too many cooks spoils the broth. We'll not do it here, let's go to the secret meeting room."

Guang Zhen nodded. Very quickly, he managed to seek out the secret unit of the Defense Unit. Every one of them used to be a special agent back on Earth. This was a unit specially selected by Guang Zhen. Regarding the use of this unit, well, that was knowledge limited to Guang Zhen and Yao Yuan. Suffice to say it had plenty to do with how Yao Yuan found out who was manipulating the political scene earlier so easily.

Soon, after Ren Tao and Eva arrived, Xiao Niao and Bo Li came. Alongside Guang Zhen, the group was escorted by the secret unit to the secret meeting room. When they entered, Yao Yuan immediately asked Eva, "Tell us what you saw in your vision."

Eva pouted but didn't make a fuss, because she knew the gravity of the situation. She started, "I saw many visions of the future, but they are all disjointed. The one that's important I saw one hour ago. A group of about 30 aliens in silver robotic casing entered the Hope. They were of average height, about 1.2 meters. The robotic

shells were spherical and didn't look like they fit the aliens' bodies tightly. They used some kind of conical weapon, wide in the back and narrow in the front. The weapon would appear out of the casing, and with a flash of light, the metallic wall before it would melt, creating a 2-meter-wide hole.

"After that, they stormed into the Hope. They left no prisoners. With a blast of the light, the people exploded into dust. There were no bullets or trajectory. When the vision ended, it was 29 days from now."

Guang Zhen asked, "How can you tell it's 29 days later? Your power is so strong that you can tell the date and time of your vision?"

Eva pouted again. "Of course not, but this is why you assigned me a personal Thinker, right? My visions are absolutely random; they are all over the place in terms of sequence. It was such a huge headache... However, now as long as the visions are inside the Hope, I basically have a 70 percent chance of knowing the time and date of the vision. This is so much better than before."

Guang Zhen finally understood. After so years away from Earth, the Hope had undergone many upgrades. Even the original creators wouldn't believe the Hope was the Noah Two. Other than the internal structure, the Hope was like a completely different spaceship to the Noah Two.

The latest upgrade on the Hope introduced a few strange features. One of them was to label the street names and levels at easy-to-see locations. At the same time, many electronic clocks

were installed at many places so one could see the time and date whenever they wanted. These clocks were everywhere; one street would have at least 10. This confused the public greatly.

Now Guang Zhen understood that these changes were to aid Eva utilize her Sage power to the maximum capacity.

With that out of the way, he turned to look at Ren Tao and Xiao Niao. They shared a meaningful look with each other before turning to give the same look to Yao Yuan. If one didn't know better, one would suspect there was something going on within the three of them.

It was Yao Yuan who eventually spoke first. "Eva, can you still see into the future? Do you feel any side effects from changing the future yet?"

Eva answered, "The latest vision happened only some time ago, so how I can have any visions so soon? Regarding the side effects, currently, there are none."

Yao Yuan nodded and Xiao Niao chimed in, "Looks like the definition of changing the future is extremely loose. Technically speaking, when you told us about this future, the future was changed because we will not allow that future to happen. However, it looks like your power's side effect will not kick in until we commit to an actual action. That's neat."

Yao Yuan sighed. "We have no idea what the science behind normal Homo Evolutis powers are, much less the Sage. Nothing

surprises me after finding out some Homo Evolutis can look into the future. Then, Ren Tao, what are you thinking?"

Ren Tao seemed to be staring into space. When Yao Yuan called him, he was pulled out of his reverie. "Oh, me? I was thinking... If we know about this future and still do nothing, then will the future change or not?"

Guang Zhen was a traditional soldier, so he was very much averse to vagrant-like behavior. His relationship with Ren Tao was completely formal, so if they met each other personally, they probably wouldn't exchange greetings. After hearing Ren Tao's suggestion, he harrumphed. "If you continue blanking out, then our future will definitely be like that."

It was as if Ren Tao didn't hear the dissatisfaction in his criticism. He clapped and said, "That's the idea. Actually, in these few years, we've been trying to determine the limitations and functions of this prediction power, but there has been no such occasion. In a way, this will be the first time we will be able to test out this power in real time if we discount the war with the space merchants... Xiao Niao has mentioned this: the future cannot be known. Why? Because the future is constantly changing. This is why the butterfly effect can be used to describe time. This is similar to wave functions in quantum theory; it is unknowable when it is not observed, but after it comes into being, the wave function will collapse. The key is an observer. Therefore, I came up with a hypothesis for this prediction power, and that is unpredictability. Before we commit to an action, we only stop at the stage of knowledge, and that will not affect the unpredictability of the future."

Xiao Niao and Yao Yuan started thinking, but Guang Zhen was getting antsy... because he had no idea what they were talking about. He grumbled, "What is the use of talking about that now? We should be coming up with a solution instead."

To his surprise, Yao Yuan berated him, "Ol' Wong, if Ren Tao is right, then it will help us greatly in understanding the power of the Sage. Do you know why we don't ask Eva to look into the future as often as she can? That's because the pressure from utilizing the Sage's power is too big. None of us can be sure whether a decision to drastically change the Hope's future will cause Eva to go into a coma like Jay or not. We cannot shoulder such a responsibility, but if it is like Ren Tao said, that looking into the future but not doing anything will not harm the Sage, then we can have incessant visions of the future and from there choose the one that has the best outcome... But Ol' Wong, you're right as well. Now we need to focus on finding a solution."

Xiao Niao shrugged. "What else can we do? From what Eva told us, it is obvious that the aliens are from the 5th revolution or above. Even foot soldiers have access to plasma weapons, so they're at least a Level 3 space civilization. This means that our silent journey plan has failed, and there is no other solution but to warp."

The others sighed. Pain and regret clawed at Yao Yuan. They still had two more controlled warps to go before reaching the Noah One. Alas, that plan was rudely interrupted by a Level 3 space civilization. They seemed more professional than the space merchants, so if there really was a war, things were not looking well for the Hope...

"How about this, we will try our best to come up with other solutions, and if there is no better solution..."

Yao Yuan looked at them and finally said, "We'll warp in 20 days to avoid this alien civilization. There are still 20 days to go, so let's get our brain juices flowing."

The others nodded silently. Suddenly, Eva's eyes went vacant and color drained from her face. She yelled suddenly and hugged her head as she crumbled to the floor. Guang Zhen, who was standing beside her, quickly went to catch her.

However, the color didn't return to Eva's face, she mumbled, "Explosion... a big explosion. We cannot warp! This next warp will bring us next to a sun! The Hope will explode!"

Chapter 295: Destination

Space warp was a future tech beyond human comprehension. The science behind it still eluded the Academy; they had no idea how to control it. However, space warp has also been the biggest aid to humans when trying to survive in the wide cosmos. Other than finding life-preserving planets, space warp helped mankind locate mineable resources, and that was crucial to the sustenance of life. Therefore, even though it was hard, human beings had to learn more about this essential life line.

Currently, after 10 years of research, the Hope had realized a few basics about space warp.

The first was something they found out a long time ago, that an increase in load during warp would cause an increase in energy consumption. Using the current Hope as an example, the energy required during warp was provided by several large polymerized reactors. The polymerized reactors were completely different from nuclear fission reactors; the energy supplied by polymerized reactors came from polymerization of hydrogen atoms similar to the reaction within suns. The other was only energy from the fission of nuclear atoms. The energy profile of the two was completely different; one was light from a match while another was a forest fire.

Currently, the energy consumed during the Hope's warp was equal to America's national energy consumption in a year!

For the Kun Lun, the energy needed for space warp could only be provided by extra-large polymerized reactors, and the energy

consumed per time unit was so big that it had to rely on the plasma conversion system.

The second thing had to do with the space warp's randomness. After warp, no one could tell where the destination would be. It might be an empty space (which would happen theoretically 99.99 percent of the time), within a solar system, or even something like inside a planet itself. Of, course not to be forgotten was the possibility of warping to danger area, like near a blackhole, neutron star, close distance to a sun, or inside a gas giant. Any of these would cause the Hope's destruction in a matter of minutes.

Therefore, space warping, or uncontrolled space warping, was technically a gamble. Even though the chance of losing was only 0.01 percent, it was a loss that human beings wouldn't be able to recover from!

In other words, mankind was betting with their lives when they used the space warp. This was why a Sage like Eva was so important. It was why Yao Yuan and the rest were so overjoyed when they found out about her existence, and they had the entire the Hope upgraded to accommodate her power.

The upgrade was to enable Eva to clearly know the time and place she saw in her visions, and through her visions, they could come up with the perfect solution. The most important vision she could provide would be to the Hope's space warp destination.

At this moment, a blanched Eva sat in a chair, her body still shaking violently. This was because the future had been changed. After Yao Yuan decided to not risk coming into contact with the

alien army and decided to warp, the future had been changed. Yao Yuan was the Chancellor, so as long as his orders were lawful, then they couldn't be violated, and his order had changed the future.

Therefore, Eva was affected by her power's side effect. She was struggling even to stay awake. Her head was tilted to the side and her eyelids were drooping. The people around her didn't dare to let her go to sleep, because she had just revealed another surprising vision.

"...I see Uncle Yao in the captain's room, giving the order to warp. After the Hope disappeared from this place, the inside of the Hope started to give out sparks and then blood started to explode from Uncle Yao's pores. Before I could understand what was happening, the Hope had exploded. Beyond that, I can see an enormous fireball not far away from the Hope..."

After Eva said that, all the color had been drained from her face and she finally couldn't hold her consciousness anymore. Bo Li, who was beside her, quickly scooped her up and turned to address Yao Yuan. "I will take her to the hospital, you all can start the discussion without me... By the way, there are many things that can cause the leaking of blood from the body, and one of them is high gravity, which would cause the blood vessels to rupture..."

Bo Li then left the room. The room was guarded by the secret unit, so they weren't worried about her sending Eva to the hospital. The people inside the room looked like they too were sick, still under obvious shock from what Eva said.

Guang Zhen was not a Thinker, so when he saw the three of them

not talking, he laughed awkwardly. "Having a Sage sure is useful. She might have just prevented mankind's extinction... Why, what's wrong?"

Guang Zhen saw their serious expressions and his heart snapped. He quickly followed up, "Don't tell me the warp to the sun's surface is unavoidable."

Indeed, the mechanics for space warp was still a mystery. One moment they could warp to a solar system and the next moment they could be far away from the solar system, several billion lightyears away. Therefore, Guang Zhen wasn't worried after hearing about Eva's vision. After all, they could wait a few days before warping. With the size of the cosmos, the presence of suns and planets was really small. 100 warps and you might not even get close to one. This kind of warp which landed near the sun was really, really, really unlucky... the probability of that was one over several billion.

However, when Guang Zhen saw the expressions on the two Thinkers and Yao Yuan, he too realized that something was wrong... the only thing then was that the future of this warp couldn't be changed! That was too scary.

The three of them shook their heads, and Yao Yuan told him directly, "We can be sure about that with just one vision, but we thought about the same concern... It's actually very simple, which has plenty to do with controlled space warp, something we do not understand. Ol' Wong, you might not know this since you were too busy with the Defense Unit; this is something only me and the two of them know. The reality is that after ZERO started controlling

the space warps, these past few space warps have landed us inside the same solar system."

Guang Zhen whipped his head to look at Yao Yuan in shock. Xiao Niao continued, "That's right, this is all thanks to the AI system. Ever since the AI system was introduced into the central mainframe, the computing power of the mainframe has seen a drastic increase. The star chart from each of our warps was stored inside the mainframe. Ever since the second controlled space warp, the mainframe confirmed that we are moving within the same solar system, and we're moving towards the solar system's center. After one more controlled warp, we will reach our destination."

Yao Yuan picked up the thread of conversation. "Now do you understand? Controlled space warp brought the Hope closer and closer to the sun because the closer to the sun, the greater the density of planets. When Eva said that the Hope warped to the sun, I had this suspicion... Could it be that the destination for Hope's past controlled space warps have been set to be the same but ZERO needed to calibrate the location through trial and error? Each calibration would take about three months... Simply put, the Hope actually was in a stage of controlled space warp for the period of the three months, and the destination and direction of the warp was targeted at the Noah One, but without ZERO's calibration, the accuracy of the warp's exit couldn't be maintained..."

"This reminds me of an interesting experiment in quantum theory," Ren Tao suddenly said. "At the time, the scientists were observing the movement trajectory of electrons. They realized that the electrons occupied multiple trajectories even though they all led to the same destination. Could it be that controlled space warp follows the same rule? In essence, the destination has to be

confirmed first and then use the multiple space warps to calibrate its location, or else why would we warp so many times?"

Guang Zhen understood what they meant. Simply put, after the Hope had set its location, which was the location of the Noah One's life-preserving planet, without ZERO's control, the Hope would appear randomly in the solar system and would have a high chance of warping close to the sun... After all, suns were common in the cosmos, so one's location was the most easily confirmed. Therefore, warping close to the sun was the easiest way to enter the solar system the Noah One was in...

However, in that case...

The Hope couldn't randomly warp anymore?

"No matter what, we have to prepare accordingly. Ren Tao, you are responsible for looking after Eva. After she wakes up, ask for more details from her vision and try to come up with a solution. Xiao Niao, you go and contact ZERO and ask her whether controlled space warp can be stopped after it was initiated. Lastly, Ol' Wong, you and I..."

Yao Yuan turned to Guang Zhen and said seriously, "We're going to go check on the Space Combat Jet Prototype 011s and other equipment..."

"To prepare for the war with the aliens!"

Chapter 296: Ruin Deception Strategy

Eva's fainting spell lasted for two days and two nights... the reason for her early resuscitation was because of Yao Yuan, the Homo Evolutis "charger". Yao Yuan spent about one hour every day holding Eva's hand, even though he had no idea what kind of science this operated on, but it did help decrease the pressure applied after over-exertion of Homo Evolutis power.

It was worth noting that Yao Yuan's "charger" power had no effect on other Double-S grade Homo Evolutis; therefore, Jay, the Deceiver, was still asleep. Furthermore, it felt weird for him to hold another man's hands and stare at his face intensely, especially in Jay's wife, Xiao Chen's presence. Therefore, he stopped after giving it a few tries.

With Eva's recovery, it would be 27 days until the supposed alien infiltration into the Hope. It might sound like a long time away, but who knew how long the aliens had hesitated before the attack? They might have been observing the Hope for a long time already. Since they had no way of figuring out the answer, discovering the time for a safe space warp seemed to be the better solution.

However, Eva was still weak after her recovery, so Yao Yuan waited for another three days before rushing to the hospital. When he arrived, he saw Eva playing with the newest scientific product, a palm-sized computer, excitedly... it was truly palm-sized because it was the size of a normal Sony PSP or Apple iPhone, but its internal hardware was at the level of actual 4th revolution computers. The girl was happily engrossed in her game, and Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, Bo Li, and Guang Zhen were already gathered in the room.

When Eva saw Yao Yuan arrive, she put down the game and yelled, "Hey, Uncle Yao, I'm not the Hope's slave! You can't ask me to use my power again when I just recovered from exhaustion from using it. Do you want to kill me?"

Yao Yuan noticed other people's helpless smiles. Obviously, they had tried to advise her before he arrived, but this time, the young woman was stubborn and refused to use her Sage power again.

Yao Yuan shrugged helplessly and sat down beside her to console her. "Little Eva, you practically grew up on the Hope, so I believe you have a great connection to it... Do you really have the heart to see it destroyed just like that? Be it through alien infiltration or a space disaster, do you have the heart to see it destroyed? Come on, stop fussing about and tell us what the new vision is, or do you have any demands? We will fulfil them to our best capacity. You see, this palm computer is not out in the market yet, but because we heard you're a gamer, we obtained one for you ahead of time."

Eva looked at the device in her hand, and her reaction startled Yao Yuan. Her eyes started watering and she threw the device at Yao Yuan. Then she scurried under the cover to cry.

Yao Yuan was dexterous enough to catch the computer Eva threw at him, but facing the weeping of a little girl, he was immediately flustered. Eventually, Bo Li took his hand, led him outside of the room, and revealed to him why Eva was so stubborn this time.

"It's because she saw death..."

Bo Li continued with a straight face, "You and Uncle Wong are professional soldiers, special agents used to death and killing. Me, Ren Tao, and Xiao Niao lived through the period of anarchy back on Earth, so we've seen our fair share of death, but when she got on the Hope, she was only several years old. Even though the Hope has seen a few disasters and wars since then, she didn't see the massacre personally with her own two eyes. However, this time she saw the aliens kill people and then the Hope's explosion. Think about it, she saw you being incinerated by the sun into a skeleton and probably the death of her many close family members and friends. How real are the Sage's visions? We have no clue, but what if the visions are as real as real life experiences? You want her to relive that whole experience? No wonder she's crying."

Yao Yuan was speechless. Indeed, death and killing had become something normal for him and Guang Zhen. There had been at least 1,000 lives that he had taken, not counting the massive amount of aliens. He was inoculated to the fear of death, but Eva was different. Even though the Hope was forced to leave Earth, Yao Yuan did one thing well, which was to prevent the people on the Hope from being influenced by negative feelings. He gave them a fair system and law and tried his best to fulfill their needs, which was why civil movement and science had been progressing so smoothly on the Hope.

However, this also meant that the people on the Hope hadn't really experienced serious strife. Eva was one of the lucky ones, so it was entirely possible that she was stressed out by her visions.

Yao Yuan and the others spent a few hours in Eva's room just talking to her. Finally, Eva had relaxed enough to give her power

another try.

"Perfect." Yao Yuan's face split into a broad smile. "In the few days after you awakened, did you see any more visions? What is the future for the Hope like?"

Tears started appearing in Eva's eyes again, but she took a deep breath and continued, in a shaking voice, "Of course I've seen some visions. The future is unfortunately still the same. Either the aliens infiltrate the Hope to murder all of us or enslave us, or the Hope explodes after warp. There are no other visions than these two."

Yao Yuan looked at the rest and said, "Then I decide to warp at tomorrow 4 PM. In that case... has the future changed?"

Eva hesitated before shaking her head. "No, I don't see a new visions, so this means that the future is still the same. Either you don't warp tomorrow at 4 and 20 plus days later we will be infiltrated by aliens, or you do warp and the Hope will be destroyed near the sun's surface. I don't see anything else beyond that."

Yao Yuan frowned and sighed. "Then rest for now. If you see anything else, you must inform us immediately... Contact Ren Tao or anyone of us; as long as you contact us it's fine."

Eva nodded weakly before lying down. The rest shuffled quietly out of her room and back to the secret meeting room.

A heavy silence fell in the meeting room. After a long pause, Xiao Niao said, with apology, "I couldn't contact ZERO. I've kept my computer open for 24 hours for the past few days, but there has been no sign of her. I bet she is staying inside that UFO, so I have no chance of asking her about controlled space warp."

Yao Yuan sighed. "It has been incredibly careless of us. We thought the controlled space warps would happen only every 3 months and we could use random space warps the rest of the time. However, it seems like controlled space warps are long lasting and will go on for 15 months. In other words, the moment we decided to save the Noah One, the process cannot be changed or reverted, unless ZERO appears and tells us more about controlled space warp... So, what shall we do now? Warping is not an option, and we'll have to wait for ZERO to appear one and a half months from now, but what's the point then?"

Guang Zhen asked, "What about fighting? Our Black Star Troopers have been strongest since we left Earth. We have the second generation space combat jet, the Prototype 011... If possible, why don't we ambush the alien troops that will attack us? Since we know about their existence and the time of their attack, ambush should be a very effective tactic."

Before Yao Yuan answered, Xiao Niao did. "Commander Wong, that won't work. You should have heard many things in the past few days from Professor Bo Li about this group of aliens. Based on Eva's vision, these aliens utilize plasma weapons from the 5th revolution, and that is something undeniable. The space merchants had several 5th revolution technologies, yet their main weapon was still from the Gaussian level, but this alien civilization will be using plasma weapons. This means that they are at least at

the 5th revolution and a level 3 space civilization, a level higher than us. We're like American Indian natives using stone axes to fight with settlers armed with firearms. There's no chance of winning!"

After another long, uncomfortable silence, Yao Yuan suddenly raised his head to address the room. "In any case, we will have to figure out a way to survive somehow. Didn't the strategist department come up with a solution earlier? We'll just use that..."

"The last section of the silent journey plan..."

"Ruin Deception Strategy!"

Chapter 297: Strategy Preparation

Silent Journey was the strategy used by the Hope to approach the Noah One. Its biggest mission was to completely cut off the Hope's connection to the external world, be it from the angle of materials or signal. This would lower the possibility of being discovered greatly.

However, the possibility wasn't zero. After all, according to Murphy's law, anything that can go wrong will go wrong. Therefore, to prevent such accidents, when Silent Journey was drafted, Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, and Yao Yuan came up with a contingency plan that took several months to plan...

This plan was the ruin deception strategy!

What did the current the Hope look like?

Like a chopstick-shaped space rock if seen from afar. If one looked closer, it would appear like an abandoned spaceship.

The Hope had completely isolated itself through the use of the creator's particle, so no signal was going to be transmitted. Furthermore, with physical shielding, no light source would be seen from the outside either. The Hope looked like an actual dead object. Even if seen, aliens wouldn't be able to scan the information within, so the biggest possibility was them assuming that the Hope was an empty, abandoned spaceship. In other words, when aliens spotted the Hope, there would be a big chance they viewed it as the space ruins of a dead civilization!

This was the key to the ruin deception strategy, it played into this psychology!

From the information given by the space merchants, there were many documents detailing such dead civilizations' ruins. According to the technological level, the ruins were divided into low-level ruins, medium-level ruins, and high-level ruins. Similarly, the danger scale of each of the ruins was different according to the technological level as well. For example, the junkyard civilization that the Hope stumbled across earlier was a low-level ruin and could be counted as the lowest among the lows, as its greatest source of danger came from automated defences.

Compared to low-level space ruins, medium-level ruins were a lot more dangerous. For example, the information from the space merchants detailed such a tale. A ruin-hopping civilization found a mid-sized spaceship, and the spaceship looked broken from the outside. This race was already experienced at exploring ruins, with at least 1,000 years of experience behind them, so of course they wouldn't be reckless enough to send their people in without some preparation. Therefore, they spent a decade analysing and observing this spaceship. They even collected some spaceship pieces to conduct analysis on to ascertain that this spaceship's technology might be beyond their expectations. Therefore, they contacted about 10 space civilizations that had trade history with this dead civilization, planning to enter the ruins together.

In the end, only one of these civilizations, which was caught up in their own troubles and couldn't come, escaped the fate of extinction. The rest of the civilizations were destroyed in this normal-looking spaceship... This was a high-level space ruin. After

the many space civilizations entered the spaceship, its self-destruct mechanism was triggered. Eventually, it exploded in the form of a small blackhole which not only swallowed all the civilizations but had changed the constellation of the area...

Therefore, spotting a space ruin might not always be a good thing. If the salvage was successful, the civilization would benefit from the technology left behind, but if the salvage failed, the best situation was the civilization escaping with a huge loss of resources, the worst would be a total extinction.

Therefore, since Silent Journey was already prepping the Hope to look like a space ruin, the plan was to continue that deception. More actions would be carried out to give the Hope the appearance of a space ruin, and hopefully this would give the Hope more time. After all, it needed only another three months before it could warp, and if it was really impossible, then they could still warp away (This was before they knew this option was impossible); therefore, there was no need to really fool the aliens, as the main point of the plan was to buy time.

After Yao Yuan decided to go along with the ruin deception strategy, the Hope started to get busy again. Thankfully, this strategy was planned earlier, so all the pieces were already designed. They only needed to set them up now.

Two days after the decision was made, Eva left the hospital. She sat in captain's room playing her palm computer. Sitting around her were Yao Yuan, Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, Guang Zhen, and Bo Li. Yao Yuan in the captain's chair stole a look at his electronic watch.

"Five more minutes to the initiation of the ruin deception strategy. Eva, what kind of future do you see?" Yao Yuan looked at his watch again after asking Eva.

Eva was completely focused on her game. She shrugged. "In any case, if there's a new vision, I will definitely tell you. I can't create something out of nothing, so you can stop with the harassing questions. Uncle Yao Yuan, that's very long-winded of you, don't you think?"

Yao Yuan ignored her. He took another look at his watch and told Ren Tao and Xiao Niao, "If the future doesn't change, then the aliens will start arrive on that fated date. This means that they still haven't discovered us and are not observing the Hope; perhaps they haven't even arrived at this solar system yet. This is the perfect time to set the ruin deception plan."

Ren Tao held the same bored expression. Xiao Niao, who was beside him, noticed his reticence and sighed. "That's true, and when you think about Eva's vision, she said only ten aliens entered the Hope and they didn't fire any powerful, long-ranged weapons at the Hope. This means that they didn't know about the Hope's internal situation. This small unit of aliens is probably the so-called exploration team; they assumed the Hope was an abandoned spaceship."

"...Fifth revolution," Yao Yuan sighed, "A technological level that high but still unable to bypass the limitation of the creator's particle, so naturally they cannot see into the Hope, but... this strategy is really our last resort. If this fails, then this will probably not end well for us."

When Yao Yuan said this, Xiao Niao's face blushed with shame. This was because this was his responsibility. He was the only person that could communicate with ZERO, and it was because of his carelessness that the Hope was stuck in this tough spot. He forgot to ask ZERO about the details of controlled space warp, specifically whether it would preclude normal space warp after it was initiated.

Right then, Yao Yuan's watch started to beep. Yao Yuan silenced the room and pressed a green button on the table. At the same time, Eva's body shook. She put down the palm computer and her face split into a big smile. "No more, the aliens are no more... Yes, the date is still the same, but I can't see the aliens anymore. In the captain's room, there's Uncle Yao Yuan and everyone else... the time is 12:00 AM, the day is over, and nothing happens!"

Eva was still a little girl, especially considering human beings' lifespan had reached 180 years. She showed her happiness purely on her face, and she couldn't stop smiling. In fact, they expected her to start dancing any time now. To be fair, she was the one under the most pressure over the past few days. Her constitution was weaker than Yao Yuan's and the rest, but she had been exposed to visions of massacres by the aliens every day. The lightning flash was strong enough to melt space armor, and even though there were only 10 aliens, that was enough to wash the Hope with blood.

Therefore, after the decision to commit to ruin deception strategy had been made, she kept herself busy playing her palm computer. She fell asleep naturally daily after she was utterly tired from gaming. She didn't dare to allow herself to relax lest the visions came back to her and she would be dropped into despair

again and again. She didn't think she could handle it...

Right then, she finally relaxed. In the future date, where the aliens were supposed to enter the Hope, nothing happened. This meant that the ruin deception plan was a success, and maybe... this meant that the despairing future wouldn't appear again!

In fact, everyone sighed in relief. They too were afraid that the strategy was completely useless and a war was inevitable...

Yao Yuan stood up and said, "Then we shall go according to plan. Ren Tao, Eva, you two should continue monitoring the changes in the future, and pay special attention to the time the aliens were supposed to enter the Hope. Remember, we only created three 'baits', and each requires one month to build and they consume a lot of resources. We need the time to set the explosives to be as precise as possible.

"We only have three ruin baits with space warp engines installed!"

Chapter 298: Operation Start!

Time passed by slowly and life was uneventful for the 200,000 plus people on the Hope. This number was a combination of 120,000 people from Earth and the newborns. The population had almost doubled compared to when the Hope first left Earth. When there were so many people, trifling household affairs were practically endless. The Hope's government was small and had few officers, but it was fairly complete. Each government worker was responsible for many things, and among them, Yao Yuan was probably the busiest.

Yao Yuan was a professional soldier, but due to his autocratic background, before he was a soldier, he already knew about many skills, especially management skills. Overall, he still considered himself a soldier before he was a leader... However, due to the Hope's unique situation, he had to be leader first before he was a soldier.

This was especially obvious during uneventful days, when Yao Yuan felt like he was one of those paper pushers. The things he had to deal with were trivial matters. Other than the few important cases, 90 percent of the time he had to deal with civil affairs. Even though there was a threat of a 5th revolution alien civilization, he couldn't drop his responsibilities lest it create panic among the citizens.

Today was the day the alien civilization entered the Hope according to Eva's vision. In the secret meeting room were Yao Yuan, Bo Li, Ren Tao, Xiao Niao, Eva, Guang Zhen, about ten top scientists from the Academy, and several Black Star Unit members. These were the people who knew about what was going on. Since

the ruin deception strategy required some high-tech equipment, the ten scientists had to be informed.

"The three ruin baits were checked five days ago. Their internal structures, mass, energy levels, and long ranged signals were all perfectly fine," a young, about 40-year-old, scientist reported to the room. Behind him was the 3D image of a ruin bait being projected.

The so-called ruin bait was a medium-large space vessel. Inside there was a 4th revolution battery that took up one-third of the internal space. The other two-thirds was taken up by the space warp engine. In other words, this was a simplified space warp system.

First, thus far it had been confirmed that the alien civilization that was supposed to enter the Hope was a 5th revolution or level 3 space civilization. Their strength couldn't be compared to the enemies the Hope had faced before. This was a civilization that had mastered the energy revolution. If mankind came head to head with this civilization, the possible outcome was being vaporized in just several hours to several minutes. This was an enemy current human beings couldn't handle.

In a situation where the Hope couldn't warp, the only chance at survival was this ruin deception strategy. The key of this plan was to present the Hope as an ancient civilization's ruin. Hopefully, the mystery would deter this alien civilization from entering. They still needed to drag it out for another half a month before ZERO would appear and the Hope would warp away from underneath this civilization's nose. All the danger would disappear then. That

was the best solution.

Therefore, the main issue was to create the impression that the Hope was a ruin that had a technology way beyond a level 3 space civilization.

Many things could be faked, but technological level wasn't one of them, especially in front of an expert. A level 3 space civilization must be far more advanced than humanity, so they would most likely possess long-distance surveillance systems that could analyze the Hope's metallic structure, its density, and theoretical framework perhaps in just seconds. Even though the Hope was pretending to be a ruin, if it was just a level 2 space civilization's ruins, then a level 3 space civilization would have nothing to get worked over. That was probably why only 10 aliens entered the Hope in Eva's vision... such a small unit was powerful enough to take down an entire level 2 space civilization.

Therefore, just how would the Hope be moulded into a civilization ruin that was much more technologically advanced than a level 3 space civilization?

Yao Yuan, the two Thinkers, Bo Li, and a large amount of scientists all agreed that the only solution was... the space warp engine!

This was the only thing on the Hope that was technologically advanced. At least from the information taken from junkyard civilization and space merchants, this was a technology not available to any known space civilization; it was a future technology even beyond the star gate technology!

It was because of this that the ruin deception strategy was possible.

First, a few space warp vessels were created. The metals that were used to create these space vessels came from the alien plant, including both the unknown alloy and pure metals. These were metals that 4th revolution technology couldn't understand or analyze. Even though they had no clue what level of space civilization they came from, it was at least way above level 3.

Such space vessels were suspended away from the Hope. When the alien civilization neared the space vessels or the Hope, using the planned time sequence, these space vessels would enter warp state. However, due to the lack of energy, these vessels would explode in space while a part of them would have warped.

Those that required mankind to use this ruin deception plan had to be at least a level 3 space civilization, so they had to know about space ruins. When the vessel exploded, they would go investigate, thus delaying the plan to explore the Hope.

Under their close scrutiny, they would find out about the second and third space warp vessels. They would discover that this low technology empty space ship (due to creator's particle blocking them from reading the vital signs within) had incredibly high technology marvels floating around it. In that case, they would suspect that the Hope was a trap or a bait. Even though this would increase their desire to obtain the Hope, it would also cause them to be extra cautious to prevent unnecessary sacrifices.

They too would try to investigate or capture the two remaining space vessels, but they would space warp the moment the aliens got near. This would help them confirm that the few floating metallic cases were incredibly high tech (at least above level 3). If the civilization that approached the Hope was also at a high level, they could even detect the space wave created during warp and calculate the density of the part that had warped away. This way, they would be even more cautious and perhaps even suspect the spaceship itself was a space trap or a space weapon (if there was such a thing)....

This was the content of the ruin deception strategy. It was a pure psychological strategy that used the alien civilization's caution towards space ruins as an opening.

The strategy was, in itself, a gamble. If the gamble was victorious, then the prize would be their lives; however, if they lost, if the alien civilization sent one soldier into the Hope, then the Hope would initiate self-destruct sequence. Therefore, it was not Yao Yuan's intention to use the ruin deception strategy. His first choice would have been to abandon the Noah One and warp. However, that choice was taken away from them, so he had no choice but to commit to this crazy gamble that used the lives of the whole of humanity as the betting chips!

After the scientist finished his report, Yao Yuan nodded and raised his head to look at the atomic clock inside the secret meeting room. "Two more hours. In two hours, the first space vessel will explode and we'll be left with two more space vessels and 16 days until our warp limit... Or, conservatively speaking, we still have 17, 18, at most 20 days. In other words, in the next 20 days, when we explode the next space vessels will become the most important

detail to the success of this strategy. It cannot be too early, because we still have to drag it out for at most 20 days, but it cannot be too late either, lest this alien civilization loses its patience and decides to send its people into the Hope... this is the main point of our discussion today. By the way, how is the progress for the observer robots coming along?"

"Observer robot?" Guang Zhen had the biggest reaction. He asked instantly, "Wait, Yao Yuan, didn't you say that observation was mutual? When we observe the surroundings, those in our surroundings would be able to observe us back, right? Shouldn't we keep quiet inside the Hope now?"

Yao Yuan shook his head. "That was when we were still undiscovered, but now that we're going to initiate the ruin deception strategy, we have already been found out, so we have to start surveying our surroundings and the conditions of the alien civilization. So how goes the observer robots?" Yao Yuan turned towards Bo Li.

Bo Li glanced at Yao Yuan coldly before tossing him a document. "The AI Observer Robots... are ready. Including the prototype, there are in total five of them. They can be deployed at any moment."

After Yao Yuan accepted the document, before he read it, he said, "Perfect. Then in two hours, after the first explosion, we will send out 3 robots..."

"I want to see this alien civilization for myself... 5th revolution technology and level 3 space civilization, I need to see what kind of

spaceship and army they have!"

Chapter 299: Shock!

The AI Observer Robots, which used the alien plant's special alloy, were also fitted with a creator's particle generator and isolator so that the alien civilization couldn't detect them other than by shining lights on them.

Similarly, to avoid detection and leaking of technological information, the normal fuel propeller and more high tech particle acceleration were unusable. Instead, the anti-gravity system was used for mobility... Using the Hope as a gravitational anchor, with its pull and push force, the robots could be moved to anywhere in space. Of course, this meant that the Hope had to move as well. However, compared to the robots' size and mass, the movement was barely discernible. Furthermore, the Hope was already in a floating state, so a small movement was to be expected. It would be fine if the robots were noticed as well, because it would make the alien civilization more cautious.

First, they would be confused by the metallurgy (as long as the alien civilization's level wasn't too high). Secondly, they wouldn't understand the propulsion system, since they wouldn't have understood the anti-gravitational system. From the information taken from the alien merchants, a level 3 space civilization's technological catalyst was plasma energy. Plasma weapons, plasma condensation, and the like, so they had not reached the level of anti-gravity. Third would be the series of space vessel explosions. All of these things pointed towards the presence of a lost ruin, one from a high level space civilization, so the alien civilization would have no choice but to be careful.

Two hours after Yao Yuan made his decision, i.e. the time the

alien was supposed to enter the Hope and one minute after the first space vessel exploded, two AI observer bots left the Hope... passed the creator's particle zone and went into space.

The rest would be waiting. The Hope had blocked off all external signals, so those on the inside had no clue what was happening on the outside and vice versa. No one knew what would happen to the two robots after they left the Hope. Even though they were all fitted with self-destruction mechanisms, no one could tell for sure what kind of technology a level 3 space civilization would have. If they could capture the robots before the robots could initiate the self-destruction sequence, then a lot of information on the Hope would be leaked, and that would not be a favourable condition...

However, the ruin deception strategy couldn't move into the next step without sending out the robots, so they could only pray that nothing happened to those two AI Observer Bots.

The atmosphere in the meeting room was incredibly heavy and nervous while they waited. Even the scientists who had quit smoking for decades couldn't help returning to their old habits. Thankfully, Eva didn't see any new visions, so that could be counted as a good development.

However, no one dared to let their guard down, especially those who knew of Eva's latest information. The more often she used her power, the lower her visions' sensitivity. It was a hard to describe limitation. Perhaps the Sage power depended on an internal energy pool, and the greater the amount of energy used from the pool, the clearer the vision. If the Sage used her power too often, then the pool wouldn't have time to recharge, thus providing only

some weak visions.

This was a recently discovered Sage's power limitation. After all, they didn't even realize the Sage was a thing until recently, and the recent continuous use of her power had revealed this weakness. Then again, this was, in a way, to be expected; if the power could be used endlessly, wouldn't that be too unbelievable?

In any case, this discovery brought new inroads to the research on Homo Evolutis. However, there were only a select few who knew of this limitation. Their hearts were palpitating at an incredible speed, afraid that the alien would rush into the Hope at any second. That was the most torturous wait ever.

Thankfully, nothing happened. 10 minutes after the robots were deployed, they appeared once more in the Hope's tunnels. They had small, metallic parts in their hands, but those were not what Yao Yuan's group cared about. They only cared about the CD attached to the robots' chests, as those recorded everything the robots saw.

Very soon, the two CDs arrived at the secret meeting room. Everyone turned to look at the screen with bated breath.

The video was taken from the robots' viewpoint. The video began by showing the robots leaving the Hope through the specialized airways. After a few turns, the robots left the Hope's metallic walls and ventured into deep, dark space. In front of their eyes was...

A fleet of silver-colored spaceships. They were glittering in space

like a swath of impressive-looking stars. From the robots' angle, the spaceships stretched more than ten thousand kilometers.

Yes, somewhere far away from the Hope, near a terrestrial planet, was a large, sprawling fleet of spaceships or warships. Observed with the naked eye, there was more than 10,000 warships, and at the center of them all was a flattened, oval-shaped mothership. It was as large as a planet. Even from the Hope's distance, it was still as clear as day. In fact, 80 percent of the light was coming from this mothership. In comparison, the warships surrounding it were like ants beside the titan's feet.

This was an alien fleet. From the endless stretch of warships, this could very well be the whole level 3 space civilization's population, military, and habitat.... That large mothership, everything humanity could see, made up a level 3 space civilization.

Shocking!

Incredibly shocking!

As the video was posted on screen, the Hope's central mainframe had already started its dissection. First was the distance between the Hope and the alien fleet. Next would be number of alien warships, size of the warships and mothership, and the technological level from observable cues. All of these were being analyzed by the central mainframe. Slowly, the data appeared beside the screenshots.

"There are 36,000 observable warships. The smaller warships log

in a length of about 600 meters, and there are 28,000 such warships. Medium-sized warships are about 4,700 meters long and there are 6,000 of them. Larger warships are about 32,000 meters long and there are 2,000 of them. The mothership... is a circular plate shape. It's height about 81,000 meters and its diameter is about 1,270,000 meters. It is in the middle of centrifugal self-rotation..."

When the data appeared on screen, the few scientists gasped audibly. One of them whizzed, "This is impossible! Such a large, metallic object self-rotating using centrifugal force? How is that possible? What about its internal force, metallic weight, and many different balances? That spaceship should have imploded already!"

The scientist beside him laughed. "Why isn't it possible? After we ventured into space, how many impossibilities have we seen? Even scientifically impossible things, like anti-gravity and space warp, exist, so what is so startling about this? The presence of a plasma shield alone could resolve all the issues you've brought up. If this is a level 3 space civilization... which is an undeniable fact, they have already entered the 5th revolution and thus have the technology to easily resolve the problems you've pointed out, or else how do you think we'll proceed with Kun Lun plan? That plan will start after we enter 5th revolution, will it not?"

Yao Yuan and the rest focused on something completely different from the scientists... This civilization was too powerful, so powerful in fact the Hope was defenseless against it. Humanity wouldn't be able to put up any sort of fight. If the Hope was discovered, there were only the choices of being captured or self-destruction; there was no third option.

"This is the strength of the 5th revolution, or level 3 space civilizations? It is..." Yao Yuan narrowed his eyes to study the video. The things before him had given him a new understanding of the cosmos.

In actuality, after entering space, even though the Hope had faced many challenges and had courted extinction many times, the Hope was incredibly lucky. At least they hadn't run into forces as powerful as this level 3 space civilization before. The strongest adversary they met was the half-baked space merchants, a space civilization that was on its decline.

However, this level 3 space civilization was at its prime. This was observable from the alien fleet before them, and its population was probably more than one billion. It had tens of thousands of warships, fifth revolution technology, and impossibly strong plasma weapons. A small warship from such a powerful civilization probably could ruin the Hope easily; that was how powerful this civilization before them was...

This was the strongest enemy mankind had faced ever since they left Earth! So powerful in fact that humanity would lose without even a fight!

This...

This was a level 3 space civilization!

Chapter 300: Star Path

This was the fourth day after the first space vessel exploded. Compared to the relative peace earlier, the public, which had been given notice of the situation, spent their days in veritable hell. There was no crueller punishment, having your heart at your throat all the time, anxious that the aliens would rush into the Hope at any minute.

The fourth day had passed and there was still no sign of the aliens. The Hope was silent. Even though the wait was still there, most had breathed a sigh of relief.

Early in the morning, Yao Yuan was awakened by the knocking on his door. Subconsciously, he went to click on the light switch beside his bed before realizing he had fallen asleep in the captain's room. He quickly sat up and said, "Come in."

Seconds later, Guang Zhen strode into the room. He sighed when he saw Yao Yuan slowly crawl out of his military-use sleeping bag. "I'll take over the night duties tomorrow, you need a good night's sleep."

Yao Yuan shook his head. "No can do. I have to do this because I have the Diviner's power to sense danger; I'll be the first to know to press the self-destruct button."

Guang Zhen sighed yet again, but he didn't deny Yao Yuan's claim. He pulled out a chair and sat down. "The morning patrol is over; there is nothing unusual. The Hope is operating just fine;

every piece of equipment is functioning perfectly. The external shield seems to be working fine as well. As long as the theoretical basis for creator's particle is sound, then I'm sure there is no leakage of information, so you don't need to worry about that."

Yao Yuan was using the bathroom in the captain's room to wash his face. After he returned to his chair, he said, "Of course I won't worry if it's you leading the team. Regardless, it's good news that everything's fine, but I still cannot brush away the worry that the aliens are just toying with us... How's Eva? Still sleepy?"

Guang Zhen's sigh turned into a deep frown. He said, after a long pause, "That's right. Due to overexertion of the Sage power, even though there wasn't severe corruption, she spent her waking hours half asleep. The doctors couldn't find any fault with her body. The poor girl, she's suffered the most during these few days."

They then contemplated into silence. After some time, as the both of them were going to continue, someone knocked on the door, and after Yao Yuan gave his permission, Xiao Niao sauntered in while still yawning.

Xiao Niao planted himself on one of the chairs and said through his yawn, "There is still no trace of ZERO. From the schedule, she'll need another 10 to 15 days before she reappears, but I did what you asked and stayed up until the early morning every day just in case she appears when I'm asleep, so I didn't even close my computer."

Yao Yuan knew Xiao Niao had done his best, but ZERO was simply too elusive; no one could tell for sure where she was. Therefore, Yao Yuan didn't blame him, but he suddenly asked,

"Since you're already here, I have something to ask you... Do you think this alien civilization is here because they're also moving towards the Noah One?"

Xiao Niao was surprised before sitting up straight to reply, "Why would you think that? This alien civilization is at least at the 5th revolution, and this solar system we're in has many terrestrial planets and gas giants. These are all valuable resources, so why couldn't they be here for them?"

Yao Yuan pressed a button on his table and a constellation chart suddenly appeared on the wall. The chart showed the solar system the Hope was in. There were a few blinking red stars on the chart. Those were the locations the central mainframe predicted the Noah One would be. In other words, those were their destination.

"Xiao Niao, as you can see, these are the locations we've predicted where Noah One can be... You know about all of these, right? In space travel, the importance of suns, even for high level space civilizations that have achieved the technology of star gate, is still very great. They still depend on the star path anchored by the sun to navigate their journey," Yao Yuan explained, pointing at the chart. Xiao Niao nodded.

In fact, this information was given by the alien merchants, details about space travel.

This sort of information was brand new to humanity at the time. After all, human beings had left Earth when they were still too young a civilization. Theoretically speaking, they wouldn't have the technology to leave the solar system, much less know about the

intricacies of space travelling.

The cosmos was gigantic, so even if the surveillance caught the presence of sun or planets, going there physically would require several thousand years even if one was travelling at light speed. This was an unimaginable distance. For space-venturing civilizations, moving from one coordinate to the next was different from how one moved within a planet. They couldn't keep on moving simply because the general direction was correct. So how would one travel in space?

First, one needed to secure a destination, and for that, one needed to have a reference. For example, if you're looking for an apple on top of a table, in relation to the apple, the table would be the reference. You could use it to determine the direction. The apple was on top of the table, but how about space? One couldn't possibly use emptiness as a reference. Due to the limitations of distance, after a celestial body was far enough away, it wouldn't be observable. The only exception would be light-giving suns. For example, if one looked at our solar system from far away in space, Earth would become an indiscernible rock, while one would easily be able to spot the burning sun.

Therefore, for space travel, the key was to obtain a navigational chart, and the things that made up these charts were the different suns. They aligned to create star paths. For space civilizations, travelling was from one sun to the next, and travelling from an empty space to another empty space was impossible. Civilizations that did that would only find themselves utterly lost in the directionless cosmos.

On the other hand, for civilizations that hadn't mastered the warp drive technology, moving from one sun to the next would require a time as long as several hundred generations. For a level 3 space civilization that had warp drive technology, the travel time would be greatly reduced to the unit of years. However, this didn't mean that warp drive was perfect, its biggest weakness being the absolute silence during warp.

Indeed, the spaceship during warp drive wouldn't be able to receive information from its surroundings, not even through light surveillance. This was because the spaceship was within a state of 'super' light speed, and the limitations for transference of information was light speed. In other words, a spaceship under such situation was akin to a blind person. Unless it was like how the Hope stumbled across the alien merchants and had already set the creator's particle beforehand. When the spaceship passed through the creator's particle, they would know of their existence and exit the warp drive state, then they would be able to survey their surroundings normally.

Therefore, even for space civilizations with warp drive, they couldn't skip the distance of several suns and go beyond that, because that would be too dangerous. The most common travelling method was to warp to the nearest sun and then from there start another analysis and calculation to adjust the difference in data before reinitiating another warp drive. This would be repeated until they reached their destination.

Yao Yuan's explanation of the star path was mostly for Guang Zhen's sake. Then he moved on to say, "These days I've been using the central mainframe to calculate the distance between this solar system we're in and other surrounding solar systems, as well as

our location in reference to known star paths. The result was astounding... This solar system is not suitable to be a pit stop, because it is far away from other known solar systems. It is only a part of one particular star path..." Yao Yuan pressed a few more buttons on his table and soon the congested suns disappeared from the screen. Finally, a silver line appeared to join several remaining suns together, signifying a star path. At the end of the path was a blinking red dot, one of the predicted locations where the Noah One could be!

Xiao Niao was stunned. After a long time, he said, "In this case, it's not so bad that we stumbled across this space civilization here now..."

Guang Zhen asked hurriedly, "How is that not a bad thing? We're like at the tip of the knife; we might perish the next second! You know that, right? Ol' Yao has practically moved into the captain's room just in case the aliens rush into the Hope. He was preparing to self-destruct the Hope!"

Yao Yuan waved for Guang Zhen to stop, but he nodded in agreement. "Indeed, if this civilization's goal is really to reach the Noah One... Then it is not a bad thing we met them here. At least we've learned some things about them now. It's better than them suddenly appearing when we're in the middle of saving the Noah One..."

"Other than that, I have another thing I'm also worried about."

Yao Yuan looked at the both of them and said, "If we've already stumbled across a level 3 space civilization here, then..."

"What are the chances that more space civilizations will appear when we're closer to the Noah One? Will there be more level 3 space civilizations, or beyond that?"

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